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THE *IRON FIST*



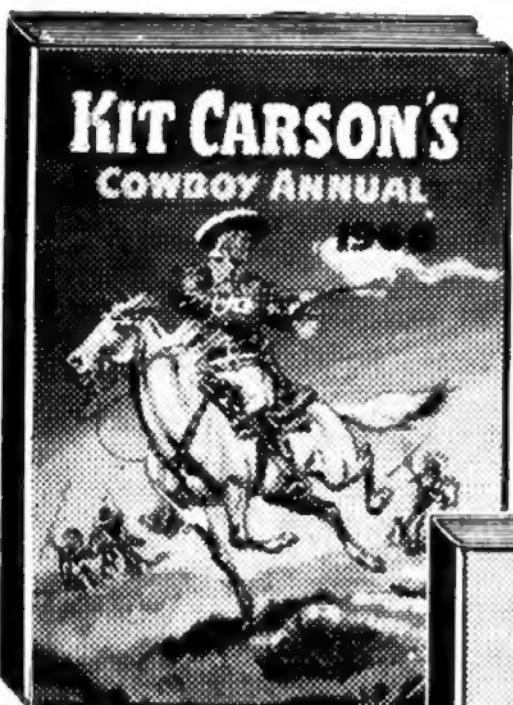
THREE GRAND ANNUALS

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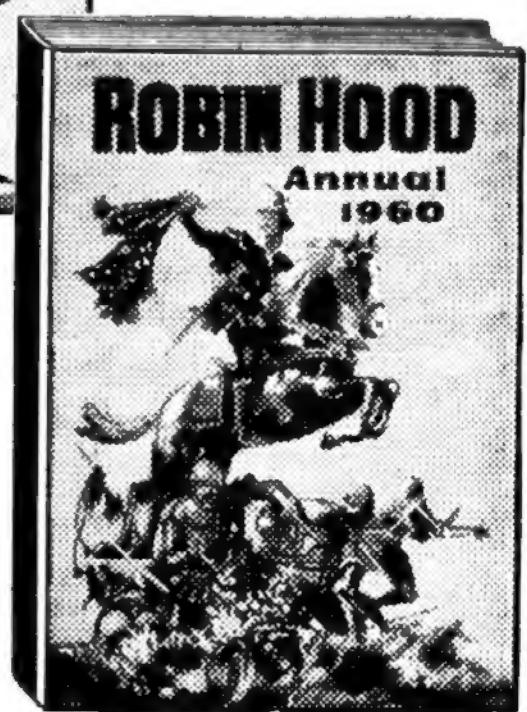


DON'T
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THEM!

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THE IRON FIST

OCTOBER 1942, AND ALL THE DESTRUCTIVE FURIES OF MODERN WAR WERE SCORCHING AND SCARRING THE DESERT SANDS OF NORTH AFRICA.

FOR THREE YEARS, THE MASSIVE MILITARY MACHINE OF NAZI GERMANY HAD MARCHED RELENTLESSLY WEST THROUGH EUROPE AND SOUTH THROUGH THE MIDDLE EAST. ONLY IN EGYPT HAD THE ALL CONQUERING NAZIS BEEN HALTED. THERE, GENERAL ERWIN ROMMEL'S VAUNTED AFRIKA KORPS, THRUSTING FOR THE VITAL SUEZ CANAL, WERE HAMMERED TO A STANDSTILL BY THE DESPERATE BRITISH EIGHTH ARMY. WEEKS OF STALEMATE PASSED — AND THE ALLIED STRENGTH GREW.

THEN, ON OCTOBER 23RD, THE EIGHTH ARMY MOVED — FORWARD IN ATTACK! THE BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN HAD BEGUN . . .



Chapter 1. OUT OF ACTION

ALL NIGHT A THOUSAND BRITISH GUNS HAD ROARED AND THUNDERED IN THE GREATEST BARRAGE IN HISTORY. BEFORE DAWN, ROYAL ENGINEERS BEGAN TO CLEAR MINE-FIELD GAPS . . .



AS THE DEADLY MINES WERE DEFUSED, DEEPER GAPS WERE GOUGED INTO THE PATTERNS OF HIDDEN DEATH. THEN THE INFANTRY BEGAN TO POUR INTO THE WIDE LANES . . .



The Iron Fist

3

AS DAWN BROKE, THE GRIM-JAWED, SUN-TANNED INFANTRYMEN REACHED THE FAR SIDE OF THE FIRST ENEMY MINE BELTS — AND BEHIND CAME THE RUMBLING ROAR OF ARMOURED GIANTS !
THE TANKS WERE GOING THROUGH !

GO
ON, YOU BEAUTIES —
KNOCK OLD
ROMMEL'S PANZERS
FOR SIX !



IMMEDIATELY ROMMEL FLUNG HIS FAMOUS PANZER DIVISIONS AGAINST THE BRITISH TANKS — AND A BITTER BATTLE BEGAN BETWEEN THE ARMOURED MONSTERS . . .



The Iron Fist

A MILE FROM THE SHATTERING VIOLENCE OF THE BATTLEFIELD, A SQUADRON OF BRITISH SHERMANS SHELTERED BEHIND A HILL . . . WAITING . . . WAITING . . .



THE TANK'S GUNNER, CORPORAL JOHNNY GRAY DUCKED BACK INTO THE TANK AND GRINNED WRYLY AT THE OTHER TWO CREW MEMBERS - THE COCKNEY DRIVER, TUG WILSON AND KEN BYRNE, THE RADIO OPERATOR.

SAME AS LAST TIME, LADS - NOT A WHISPER ABOUT GETTING MOBILE!

COR, STONE THE FLIPPING CROWS! AFTER THREE DAYS OF WAITING TO CARVE THOSE JERRY TIN CANS UP, I'M GROWING CORNS BETWEEN ME AND THIS SEAT!

MUCH LONGER LIKE THIS AND I'LL FORGET HOW TO USE THIS BOX OF TRICKS!

THEN SUDDENLY, IT HAPPENED!

FOX EASY... FOX EASY... TOP PRIORITY - MOVE FORWARD AT MAXIMUM SPEED NOW - OUT!

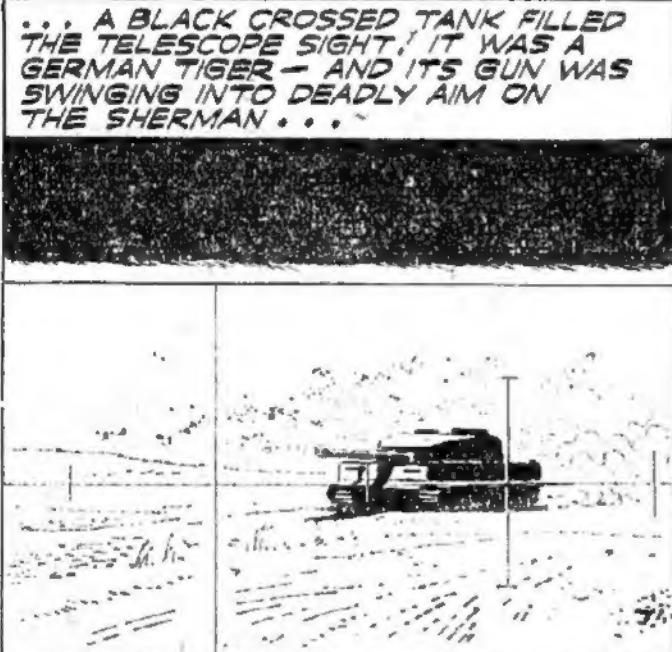
EASY ONE... TWO... THREE... FOUR - START UP! ADVANCE IN ATTACK FORMATION! OUT!

ENGINES SCREAMING TO A CRESCENDO OF UNLEASHED POWER, THE RACING TANKS SWEEP FORWARD OVER THE HILL-CREST — INTO THE HUNGRY HOLOCAUST OF DEVOURING DESTRUCTION BEYOND!

IF THE SQUADRON CAN PUNCH THROUGH THE JERRIES' RIGHT FLANK AS PLANNED - WE'LL RIP HIS SUPPLY POINTS TO SHREDS, THEN TURN AND HIT HIS TANKS FROM THE REAR!



... A BLACK CROSSSED TANK FILLED THE TELESCOPE SIGHT! IT WAS A GERMAN TIGER — AND ITS GUN WAS SWINGING INTO DEADLY AIM ON THE SHERMAN ...



THEN THEY WERE IN THE STORM OF WHINING ARMOUR-PIERCING SHELLS AND SLICING, STEEL-JACKETED MACHINE GUN BULLETS. LIEUTENANT PIKE DUCKED INTO THE TURRET, SLAMMING THE HATCH . . .

KEEP HER RUNNING STRAIGHT, WILSON! NOW LET'S SEE IF I CAN FIND A NICE FAT TIGER TO HAVE A GO AT!



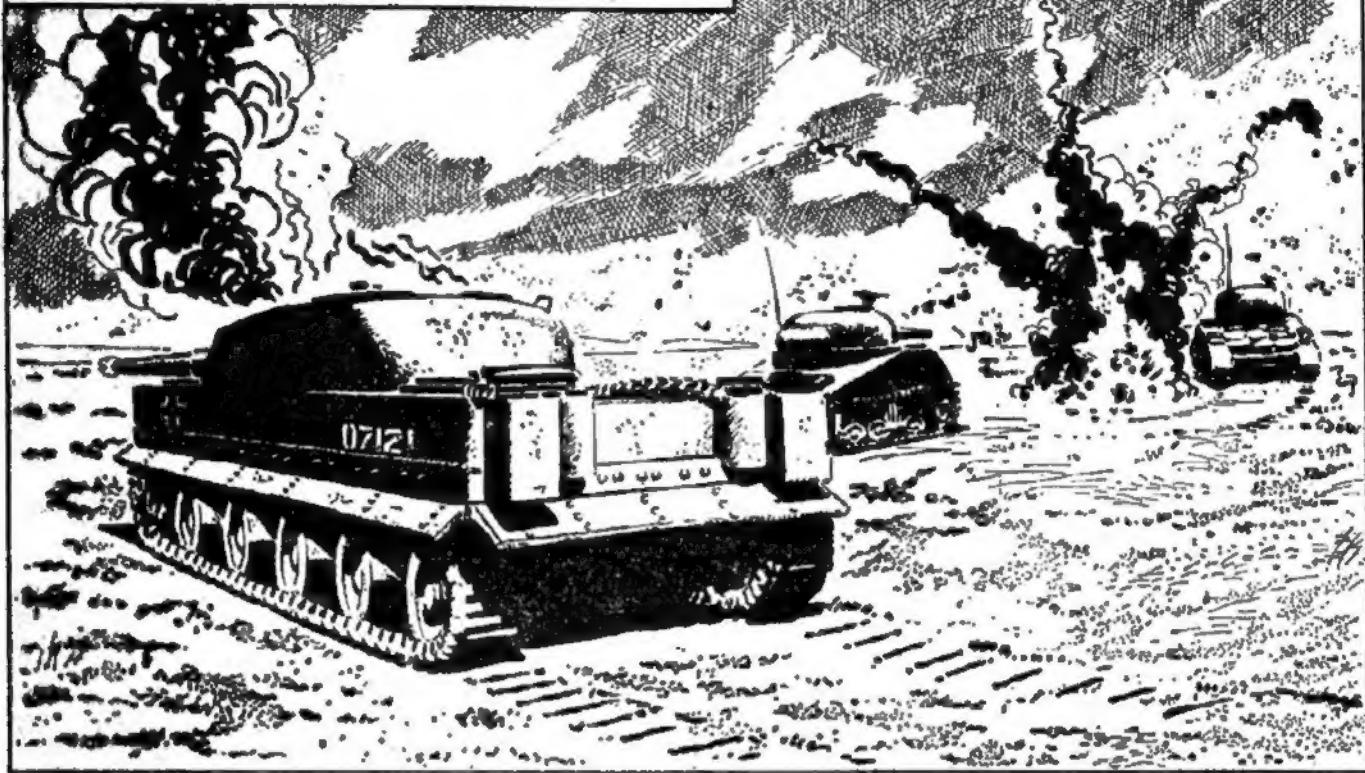
CAN'T SEE A THING YET, SIR — ONLY BURNT OUT WRECKS AND SAND CLOUDS! BUT WAIT A MINUTE!

DESPERATELY, JOHNNY TRAVESED THE GUN A FRACTION. THE GUN MUZZLE LASHED FLAME — AND A SHELL STABBED DEEP BETWEEN THE TIGER'S TURRET AND CHASSIS...

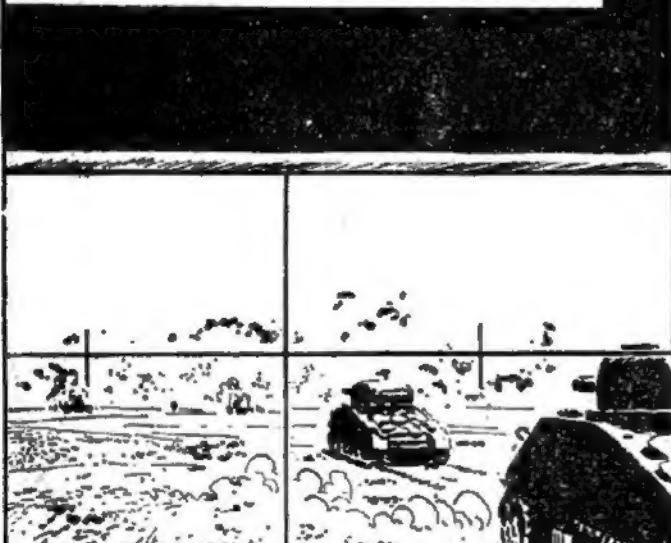


The Iron Fist

RACING RIVULETS OF BLAZING FUEL BURST FROM THE SHATTERED TANK'S ENGINE HATCHES, AND AS THE CREW LEAPED OUT, THE SHERMAN SPED PAST — INTO SUDDEN NEW DANGER . . .



GERMAN ANTI-TANK GUNS / IN A FLASH, PIKE SWIVELLED HIS PERISCOPE AROUND TO FIND THE THREE TANKS OF HIS TROOP . . .



. . . ONLY ONE FOLLOWED HIM — THE OTHER TWO WERE MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF TWO TIGERS !

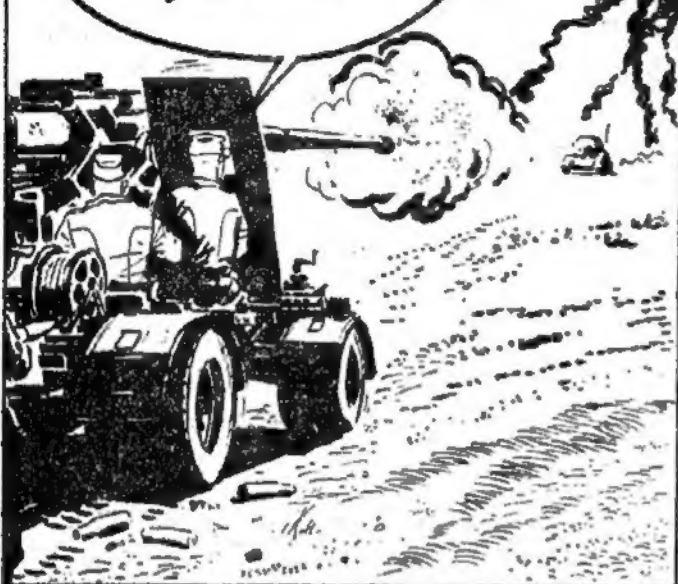
CALMLY AND SWIFTLY, PIKE GAVE HIS ORDERS — A FRONTAL ATTACK TO DRAW THE GERMANS' FIRE SO THAT THE SECOND SHERMAN WOULD STAND A CHANCE OF BREAKING THROUGH !



BUT THE BATTLE - TOUGHENED GERMANS WERE A CRACK CREW — ANOTHER SHELL SLAMMED INTO THE BREECH ...

LEFT...
LEFT. SCHNELL - /
SCHNELL. HALTEN !
ON TARGET ...

FEUER !



LIKE A THUNDERBOLT, THE SOLID, ARMOUR-PIERCING SHOT BORED THROUGH THE SHERMAN'S SHELL, SCATTERING STREAKING STEEL SPLINTERS AS IT SLAMMED INTO THE ENGINE ...

AAGH !



SUDDEN RAW, BITING SMOKE FILLED THE TANK AS THE STRICKEN SHERMAN SHUDDERED TO A STANDSTILL. FOR A SPLIT SECOND, THE CREW WERE STUNNED — THEN TRAINING AND DISCIPLINE TOOK OVER ...

WE'VE HAD IT ! SHE'LL GO UP LIKE A BOMB ANY SECOND ! TUG, SCRAMBLE OUT OF YOUR EMERGENCY HATCH-KEN, HELP ME WITH MISTER PIKE — AFTER I'VE PASTED THOSE JERRIES !



The Iron Fist

THE GERMAN GUNNERS WERE LINING UP ON THE OTHER SHERMAN — JUST AS GRAY HAD HOPED ! THE TURRET BROWNING SPAT FLAME AND LEAD . . .



SOMEHOW, THEY LIFTED THE BADLY WOUNDED OFFICER CLEAR OF THE SMOKING WRECK — ACROSS THE BLISTERING SANDS THEY STUMBLED . . . AND THEN . . .

THERE GOES THE OLD BUS / LUMME,
SHE WAS A TARTAR TO DRIVE SOMETIMES, BUT
THERB'LL NEVER BE ANNUVER ONE / ARF
AS GOOD !

SHE DID HER BEST —
RIGHT TILL THE END;
BUT FOR HER, THE REST OF THE TROOP WOULD BE PINNED DOWN HERE; INSTEAD OF BREAKING THROUGH,



ALL ABOUT THEM ROARED THE THUNDER OF BATTLE AS THEY WENT BACK ACROSS THE SHELL-RIPPED SANDS. THROUGH THE WREATHINGS, ACRID CLOUDS OF CORDITE SMOKE — PAST A SCORE OF BURNT-OUT TIGERS AND SHERMANS — TO FIND FRIENDLY-FACED INFANTRYMEN, AND A FORWARD MEDICAL POST...



LED BY JOHNNY, THEY WALKED IN SILENCE — EACH MAN KNOWING THAT THEY WOULD MISS THEIR GALLANT LEADER. PIKE WAS A GOOD OFFICER, WELL LIKED, AND WHO KNEW HIS JOB. THEN TUG GLANCED OVER AT JOHNNY . . .

HE COULD HAVE CAUGHT IT MUCH WORSE! ANYWAY, MATE, NOW THEY'LL HAVE TO MAKE YOU BOSS OF OUR NEXT WAR-HORSE — THIRD STRIPE AN' ALL!

MAYBE THE SQUADRON C.O. HAS DIFFERENT IDEAS, TUG — I'M NOT THE SENIOR CORPORAL IN THE OUTFIT!



YET THE YOUNG N.C.O. COULD NOT STOP HIS HOPES SOARING. HIS ONE DRIVING AMBITION WAS TO COMMAND HIS OWN TANK — BUT WHEN THEY REACHED THEIR H.Q. AND REPORTED, BAD NEWS MET THEM . . .

SORRY, CORPORAL — EVERY TANK IS COMMITTED TO THE BATTLE. WE'VE PUSHED THE SPARE VEHICLES INTO ACTION. YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL RE-INFORCEMENTS ARE SENT UP FROM BASE DEPOT AT TEL-EL-KEBIR!

HANG ON, HARRY — WHAT ABOUT THAT NEW JOB JUST ARRIVED AT ALEX? WE'RE DETAILED TO COLLECT IT, SO SEND THESE LADS!



Chapter 2. ENTER GOLIATH

THEIR SPIRITS SOMEWHAT DAMPENED AT BEING USED AS A MERE FERRY CREW, THE TRIO WERE TAKEN TO THE DOCKS AT ALEXANDRIA . . .

DARNED MILITARY COPPERS - WOULDN'T LET A BREEZE THROUGH THEM GATES UNLESS IT HAD AN OFFICIAL PASS!

THAT MUST BE HER - AND HECK, SHE LOOKS BIGGER THAN ANYTHING WE'VE USED BEFORE!



AS THE JEEP ROCKETED AWAY, THREE PAIRS OF ANXIOUS EYES TRIED TO PROBE THE UNFAMILIAR OUTLINES UNDER THE TARPAULIN . . .

ONLY ONE WAY TO HAVE A GOOD LOOK, CHUM, AND THAT'S STRIP HER!

'S RIGHT, KEN! I'LL NIP UP ON TOP AND START THERE!

THEN SUDDENLY A COLD, HARD VOICE STOPPED JOHNNY IN MID BREATH . . .

GET AWAY FROM THAT TARPAULIN! WHO ARE YOU - AND WHAT THE DEVIL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

CORPORAL GRAY, TROOPERS WILSON AND BYRNE, DETAILED TO FERRY A NEW A.F.V. TO OUR H.Q., SIR. WE THOUGHT THIS WAS IT!



THE TAUT GRIMNESS LEFT THE OFFICER'S PALE, UNTANNED FEATURES AS HE WALKED OVER TO THE THREE TANKMEN . . .

MY NAME IS CARSON — AND I'VE BEEN POSTED OUT HERE FROM THE ARMOURED WARFARE SCHOOL TO PUT THIS EXPERIMENTAL A.P.V. THROUGH ITS PACES ON DESERT TRIALS!

COR — FAN ME WITH A TANK TRACK! HE'S STRAIGHT OUT OF THE TANK OFFICERS' NURSERY — 'E AIN'T EVEN GOT HIS KNEES BROWN YET!



WHIPLASH SWIFT, CARSON'S HARD EYES DARTED TO TUG. A TINY PULSE THROBBED IN HIS FIRM JAW — AND JOHNNY WAS SURE HE HAD HEARD THE COCKNEY'S LOUD WHISPER . . .

STOP MUMBLING, TROOPER — AND STAND UP STRAIGHT! CORPORAL, YOU'LL DRIVE THE TRANSPORTER — I'LL BE WITH YOU IN FRONT. YOU TWO OTHERS — GET UP ON TOP OF THE TARPAULIN, AND KEEP YOUR GUNS HANDY!

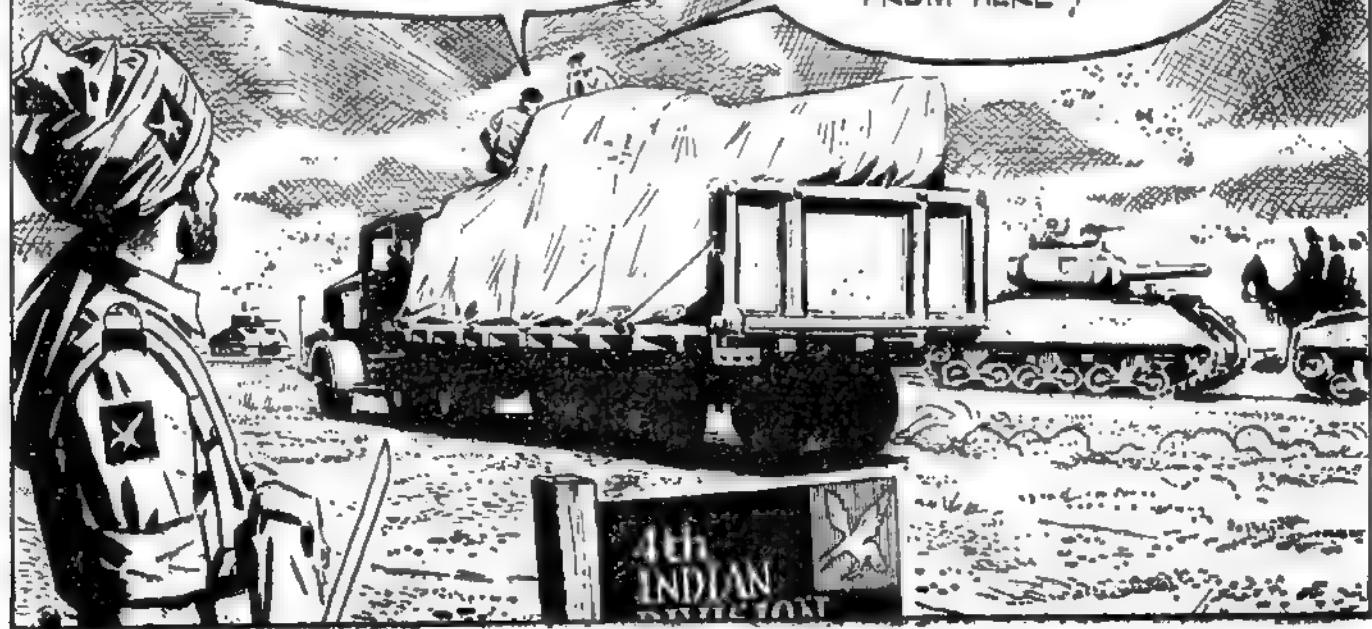


VERY GOOD, SIR!

SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, THE MASSIVE LORRY SNORTED ITS WAY THROUGH ALEXANDRIA AND WESTWARD ON TO THE DESERT ROAD — TOWARDS THE GROWLING RUMBLE OF POUNDING GUNS . . .

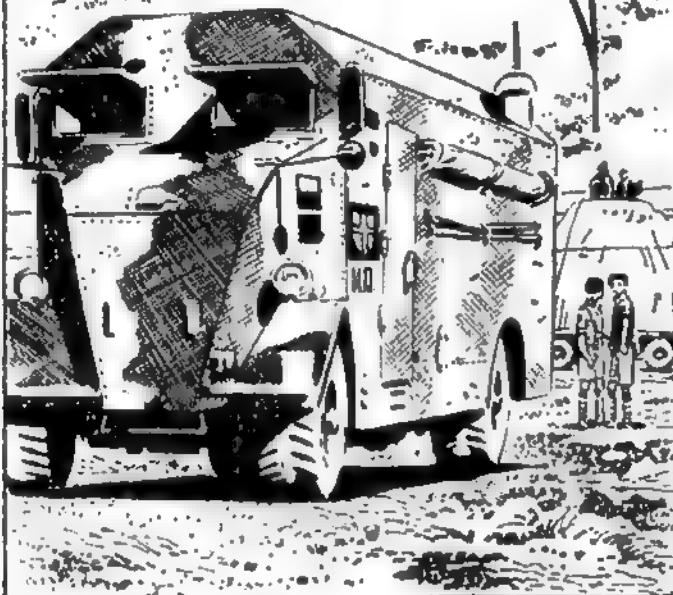
LUVADUCK! THIS NEW GEEZER'S AS GREEN AS THEY COME! I DON'T 'ARP PITY THE CREW HE GETS FOR THIS NEW TANK TRIAL CAPER! WHAT A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIM AND MISTER PIKE.

NEVER MIND THAT, TUG! LISTEN TO THAT BARRAGE — SIXTY MILES AWAY AND YOU CAN FEEL THE AIR SHUDDERING FROM HERE!



AFTER THREE HOURS THEY REACHED THE FORWARD DEFENSIVE AREAS... AND THEIR SQUADRON COMMAND POST...

LUMME - THEY'VE BEEN NATTERIN' FOR NEARLY TWENTY MINUTES. I WISH HE'D HURRY IT UP, THEN WE COULD START HUNTN' AROUND FOR A NEW BUS!



THEN TUG'S IMPATIENCE WAS ANSWERED - WITH THE BIGGEST SHOCK OF HIS LIFE!

YOU LADS WANTED A TANK - WELL, YOU'VE GOT ONE. AND LIEUTENANT CARSON HAS ASKED FOR YOU AS HIS CREW!

LUMME... NO!



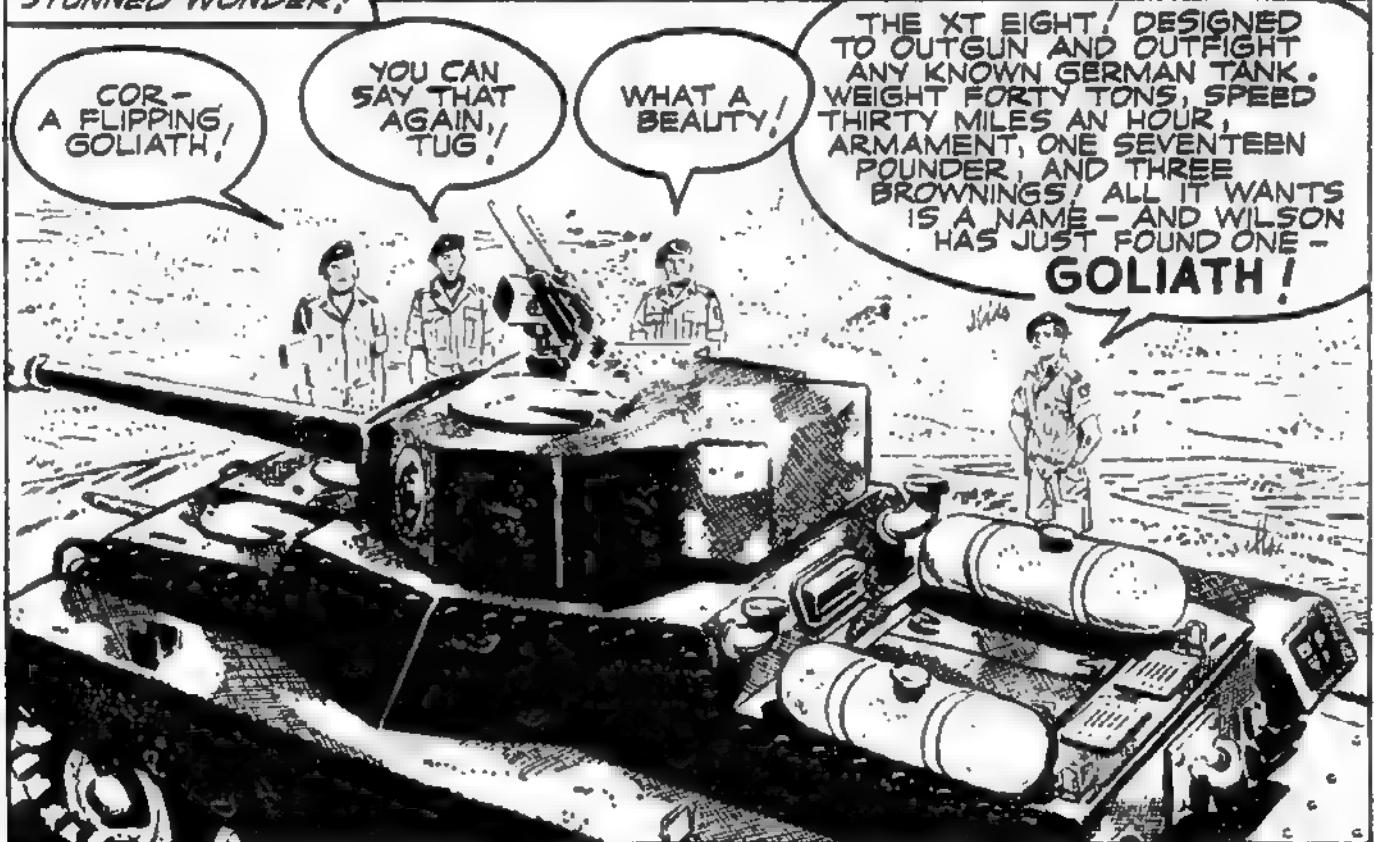
WITHOUT MUCH ENTHUSIASM, THE THREE TANKMEN UNLASHED THE TIE ROPES. WITH A GREAT HEAVE, THE TARPAULIN SLID FREE, AND THE TRIO STOOD IN STUNNED WONDER!

COR - A FLIPPING, GOLIATH!

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN, TUG!

WHAT A BEAUTY!

THE XT EIGHT! DESIGNED TO OUTGUN AND OUTFIGHT ANY KNOWN GERMAN TANK. WEIGHT FORTY TONS, SPEED THIRTY MILES AN HOUR, ARMAMENT, ONE SEVENTEEN POUNDER, AND THREE BROWNING'S! ALL IT WANTS IS A NAME - AND WILSON HAS JUST FOUND ONE - GOLIATH!



FOR THE REST OF THAT DAY, AND HALF THE NIGHT, CARSON MADE THEM WORK UNTIL THEY WERE FIT TO DROP, PREPARING GOLIATH FOR THE TRIALS. BUT AT MIDNIGHT EVERYTHING WAS READY. THE TEST AREA CHOSEN WAS SOUTH OF THE GREAT QATTARA DEPRESSION, A HUGE STRETCH OF SUB SEA LEVEL QUICKSAND FORMING THE SOUTHERN BOUNDARY OF THE FURIOUS BATTLE STILL RAGING AT EL ALAMEIN !

AT DAWN, WITH THE RUMBLING ANGER OF THE POUNDING GUNS STILL TO THE WEST, GOLIATH AND ITS CREW STARTED OFF . . .

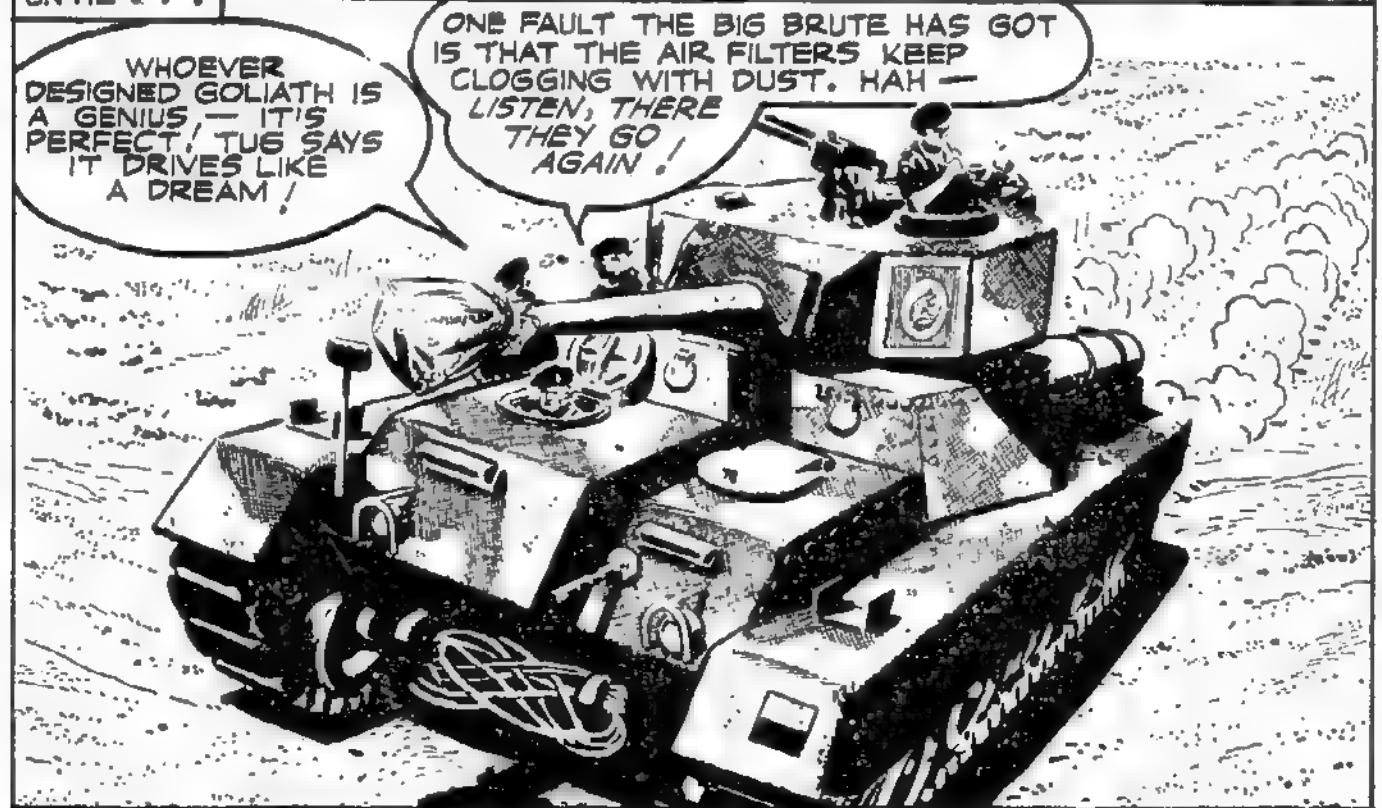
THIS LARK AIN'T SO BAD, CHUM — EXCEPT THAT YOU HAVEN'T GOT THAT TANK OF YOUR OWN, YET — AND WE'RE OUT OF THE SHINDIG OUR OUTFIT'S HAVING WITH JERRY'S PANZERS !



ALL THAT DAY, CARSON DIRECTED THE MASSIVE TANK WESTWARDS, BORDERING THE DEPRESSION. TESTS WERE CARRIED OUT AND ADJUSTMENTS MADE BEFORE THEY MADE NIGHT CAMP. AT DAWN THEY WENT ON AGAIN — UNTIL . . .

WHOEVER DESIGNED GOLIATH IS A GENIUS — IT'S PERFECT! TUG SAYS IT DRIVES LIKE A DREAM!

ONE FAULT THE BIG BRUTE HAS GOT IS THAT THE AIR FILTERS KEEP CLOGGING WITH DUST. HAH — LISTEN, THERE THEY GO! AGAIN!



The Iron Fist

HALF A DOZEN TIMES ALREADY, THE ENGINE AIR FILTERS HAD BECOME SOLID WITH SAND — AND NOT ONCE HAD CARSON OFFERED HIS HELP TO CLEAR THEM . . .



THEN SUDDENLY JOHNNY'S HEAD JERKED UP — CARSON TOO HAD HEARD THE DRONING WHINE IN THE SKY TO THE NORTH . . .

JERRY ME. ONE-O-NINE'S MUST BE PATROLLING DOWN HERE FOR ANY FLANKING ATTACK!



THE SINISTER BLACK-CROSSED SHAPES HELD THEIR COURSE FOR A MOMENT — THEN THEY TURNED AS ONE . . .

THEY'VE SEEN US!
TAKE COVER!



ENGINES SCREAMING AT FULL BOOST,
THE SLEEK FIGHTERS ROCKETED
DOWN — MACHINE GUNS AND CANNONS
STREAMING FLAME . . .



JETS OF TRACER LICKED VIOLENTLY
ACROSS THE FORWARD HULL OF
GOLIATH AS THE ME. 109'S CAME IN
AT POINT BLANK RANGE . . .



. . . AND LEAD FROM CARSON'S GUN
CHEWED INTO THE FIGHTER'S BODY!

THE STRICKEN FIGHTER LURCHED
CRAZILY — THEN CLAWED LEVEL
TRAILING FLAMES AND SMOKE.
IT THUNDERED OVER, TWENTY
FEET ABOVE CARSON'S
HAMMERING GUNS . . .



The Iron Fist

THE BLAZING MESSERSCHMITT FELL THROUGH THE AIR. AND A MOMENT LATER, THE SHATTERED PORT WING BROKE OFF - AND THE PLANE PLUNGED INTO THE SANDS, EXPLODING IN AN EYE-SEARING FLASH OF FIRE!

KEN - GET ROUND THE OTHER SIDE AT THE DOUBLE. NUMBER TWO IS COMING IN FOR ANOTHER ATTACK!

I'VE GOT HIS SHARE READY AND WAITING!

WITH FANATICAL FURY, THE GERMAN FLUNG HIS FIGHTER DOWN, ITS GUNS STABBING LEAD AT THE TANK. THEN, IN THE LAST SECONDS, CARSON'S BROWNING'S FIRED AGAIN . . .

GREAT SCOTT! THE LONG-RANGE FUEL TANKS - IF THEY EXPLODE . . .

THE NAZI PILOT'S NERVE SPLINTERED THEN — VIOLENTLY HE WRENCHED HIS BULLET-RIDDLED PLANE AWAY. BUT BEHIND HIM HE LEFT SUDDEN DEADLY MENACE — AS WRITHING FIRE ENVELOPED THE FUEL TANKS.



FLICKERING FINGERS OF RAW HEAT JABBED AT JOHNNY AS HE LEAPED BETWEEN THE TANKS, FUMBLING WITH THEIR STEEL LOCKING STRAPS. THEN THEY FLIPPED FREE — AND DESPERATELY JOHNNY KICKED OUT TWICE . . .



The Iron Fist

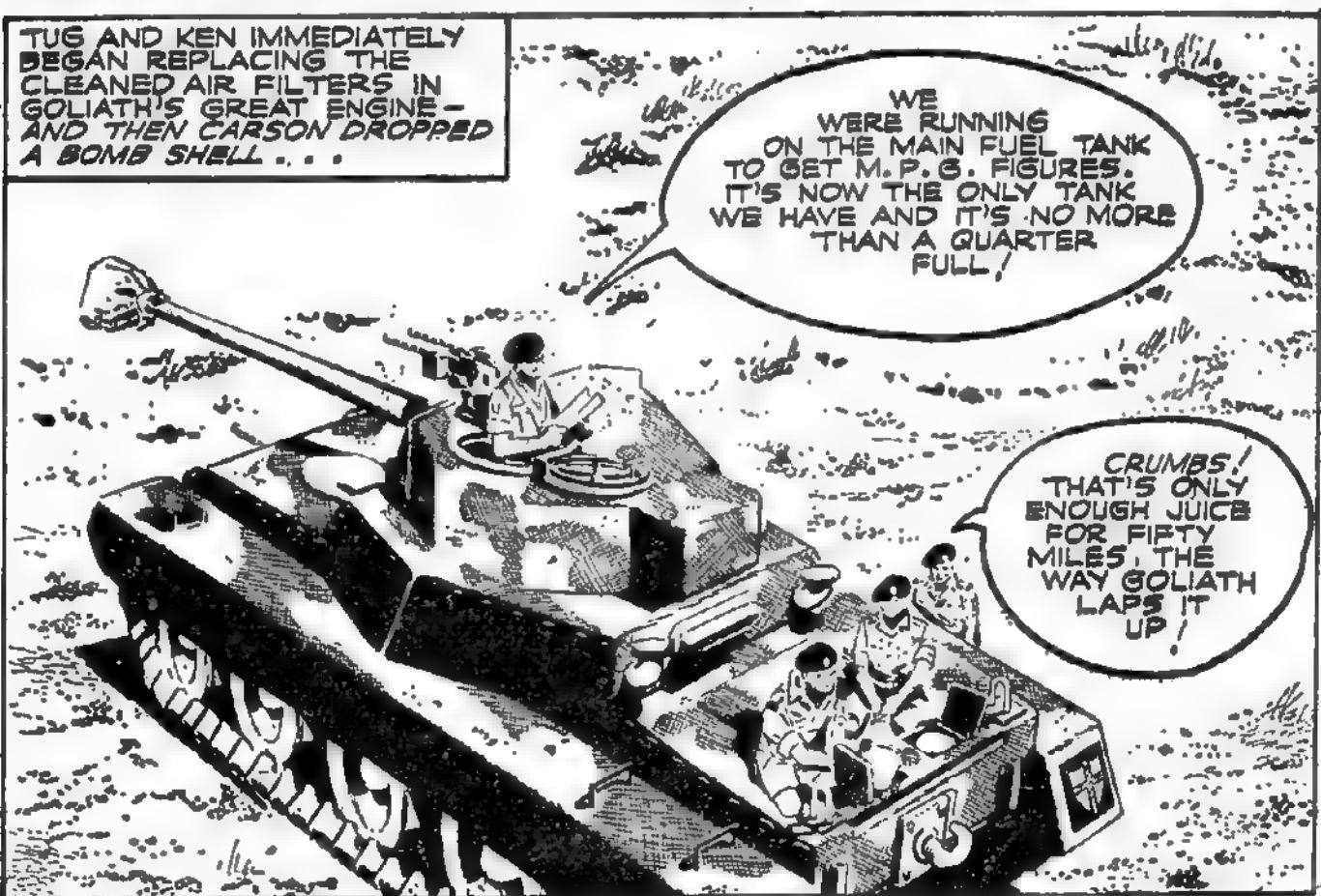
AS THE FLAME-WRAPPED CONTAINERS ROLLED SLOWLY AWAY, GOLIATH'S CREW WATCHED WITH BATED BREATH - UNTIL . . .



THE AIR - SPLITTING FLASH DIED, AND THE EYES OF MARK CARSON AND JOHNNY GRAY MET, BRIGHT WITH NEW-FOUND RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER . . .



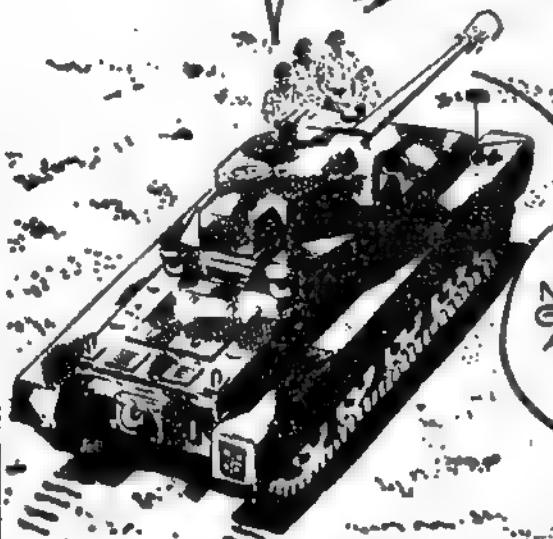
TUG AND KEN IMMEDIATELY BEGAN REPLACING THE CLEANED AIR FILTERS IN GOLIATH'S GREAT ENGINE - AND THEN CARSON DROPPED A BOMB SHELL . . .



THE GRIM TRUTH OF THEIR POSITION WAS PLAIN . . .

WE'RE OVER A HUNDRED MILES FROM H.Q. — SO THAT MEANS ABOUT A SEVENTY MILE WALK AFTER WE RUN OUT OF 'JUICE.'

AND IF WE BROKE OUR RADIO SILENCE, JERRY'D DARNED SOON PICK UP THE / SIGNALS .



WE'RE NOT WALKING— AND WE'RE NOT LEAVING GOLIATH! HERE'S ANOTHER WAY— LOOK AT THIS MAP!

WE CAN'T TRANSMIT BY RADIO — BUT WE'VE HEARD THE LATEST GEN ON THE BATTLE. THE JERRIES ARE BEING PUSHED BACK — SO BY NOW THE EIGHTH ARMY IS PROBABLY OPPOSITE US ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DEPRESSION. THEY'RE OUR NEAREST SOURCE OF FUEL— SO WE'RE GOING STRAIGHT ACROSS TO MEET THEM!

EL ALA



JOHNNY STARED AT CARSON IN AMAZEMENT . . .

CROSS THE DEPRESSION? BUT, SIR, THERE'S ONLY A THIN CRUST OF SUN-DRIED MUD OVER IT. WE'D GO THROUGH INTO THE QUICK SANDS LIKE A KNIFE INTO BUTTER!

WE'RE GOING, CORPORAL — THAT'S AN ORDER! I'LL LEAD THE WAY ON FOOT! GET ABOARD — AT THE DOUBLE!

FOR A SPLIT SECOND, JOHNNY HESITATED — THEN, TIGHT LIPPED, HE CLIMBED UP INTO THE TURRET FOLLOWED BY TUG AND KEN. IN SILENCE THEY TOOK THEIR PLACES AND GOLIATH'S ENGINE ERUPTED INTO THROBBING LIFE . . .

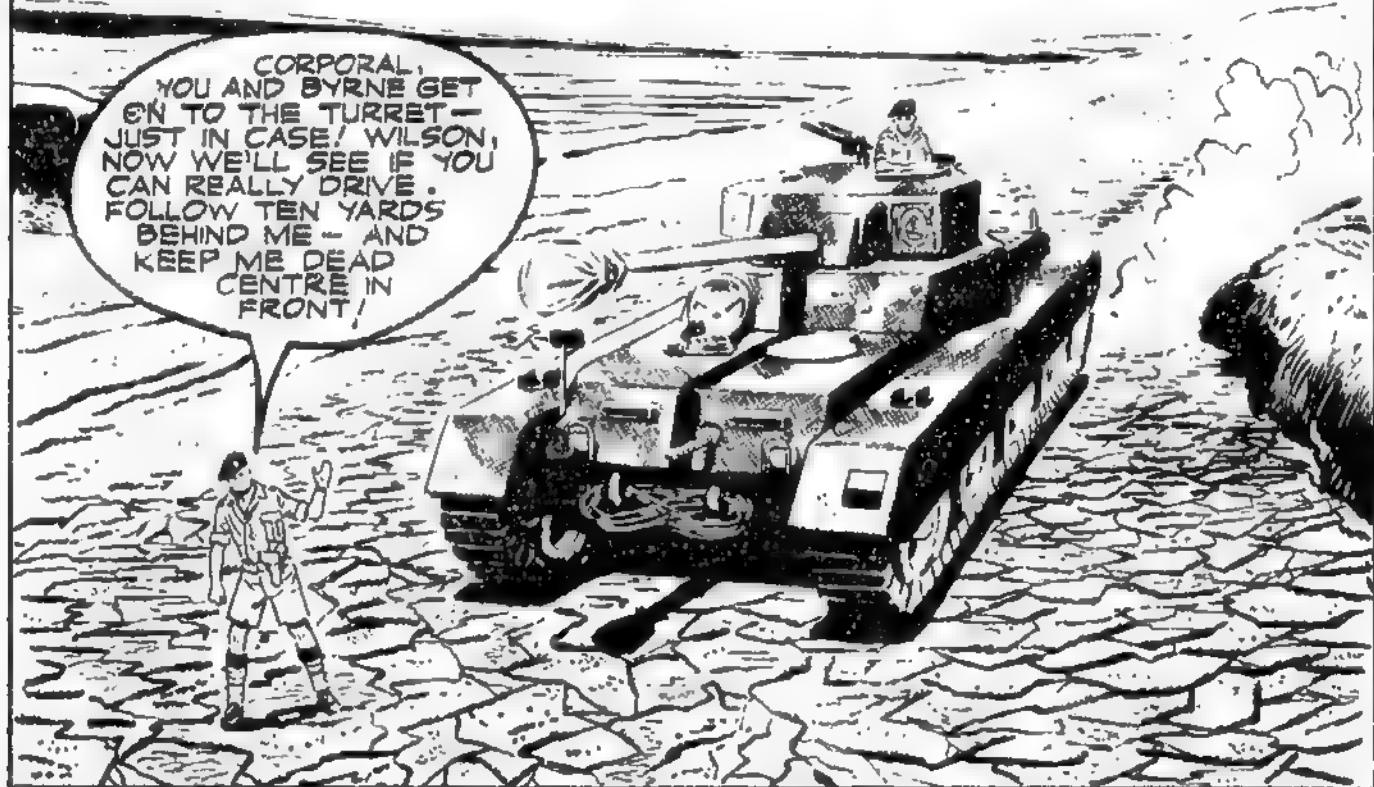
LUMME, 'E MUST HAVE SUNSTROKE, LEADING US INTO THAT BOTTOMLESS GLUE POT!



The Iron Fist

GROWLING AND SHUDDERING LIKE A RESTLESS GIANT, GOLIATH CRAWLED AFTER CARSON WHO WALKED ALONG THE EDGE OF THE DEPRESSION FOR SEVERAL HUNDRED YARDS AS IF SEARCHING. THEN HE STOPPED . . .

CORPORAL,
YOU AND BYRNE GET
ON TO THE TURRET —
JUST IN CASE! WILSON,
NOW WE'LL SEE IF YOU
CAN REALLY DRIVE.
FOLLOW TEN YARDS
BEHIND ME — AND
KEEP ME DEAD
CENTRE IN
FRONT!



SUDEN SWEAT BEADED TUG'S FACE — AND HIS HANDS WERE SLIPPING ON THE STEERING TILLER BARS, AS WITH INFINITE CARE HE EASED GOLIATH AFTER CARSON'S BROAD BACK . . .

EASY, TUG, EASY!
IF WE BREAK THROUGH
THE CRUST, YOU WON'T
HAVE A CHANCE OF
GETTING OUT
BEFORE . . .



. . . BUT SOMEHOW, AS THE TANK'S
WIDE TRACKS GROUNDED-INCHES DEEP
INTO THE SURFACE, IT HELD FIRM!

THEN BEGAN A LIVING NIGHTMARE FOR THE YOUNG COCKNEY DRIVER — EVERY SECOND HELD ITS OWN ETERNITY OF AGONY. YET THEY MERGED INTO MINUTES . . . AND BECAME HOURS . . .

TWO HOURS - WE'VE DRIVEN ABOUT EIGHT MILES. OLD TUG MUST BE FEELING THE STRAIN - WHAT ABOUT ME RELIEVING HIM, JOHNNY?

NOT A CHANCE, KEN - ONCE WE STOPPED, SHE'D START TO SETTLE AND GO THROUGH!

GRADUALLY, THE THREE MEN IN THE TANK BECAME AWARE OF SOMETHING ELSE BESIDES THEIR OWN DRY-MOUTHED FEAR. IN FRONT OF THEM, CARSON STRODE AHEAD, SEEMINGLY UNTIRING, WITH A RELENTLESS DETERMINATION THAT HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF FAILURE. TO TUG IT BECAME A CHALLENGE THAT MADE HIM FORGET HIS OWN ACHING MUSCLES AND SHIVERING NERVES - NO WHITE-KNEED OFFICER STRAIGHT FROM ENGLAND WAS GOING TO BEAT HIM! SO THE TENSION-FILLED MILES DRAGGED PAST, UNTIL SUDDENLY — THEY COULD SEE THE OTHER SIDE.



YARD BY YARD THEY CRESTED TOWARDS IT — ONE HUNDRED . . . THIRTY . . . TWENTY YARDS TO GO — AND THEN, DISASTER! TUG'S PAIN CRAMPED GRIP ON THE TILLER BARS SLIPPED A FRACTION — AND GOLIATH SLEWED SLIGHTLY...

SHE'S GOING THROUGH! TUG, GET OUT OF THERE FAST!

NO! STAY WHERE YOU ARE, WILSON! WE CAN STILL SAVE HER. CORPORAL, GET THAT TOW ROPE OFF THE FRONT!



FEAR WAS A NAGGING KNOT IN THE PIT OF TUG'S STOMACH — TEN SECONDS MORE AND HE'D BE TRAPPED! BUT TIGHT-LIPPED HE SAT THERE — AS CARSON RAPPED OUT CRISP, URGENT ORDERS . . .



AT THE END OF THE TOW ROPE, CARSON FORCED THE HOOKS BETWEEN TWO LINKS — AND BARKED A COMMAND TO TUG . . .



SLOWLY . . . INCH BY INCH . . . GOLIATH WAS HAULED OUT OF THE DEADLY LIQUID SANDS AS THE RIGIDLY TAUT TOW CABLE WAS WOUND ON THE TURNING TRACK . . .



ONE LAST CONVULSIVE HEAVE - AND THE GREAT TANK WAS SAFE!

RECKON WE COULD MAKE THAT INTO A REGULAR TRIP, TUG?

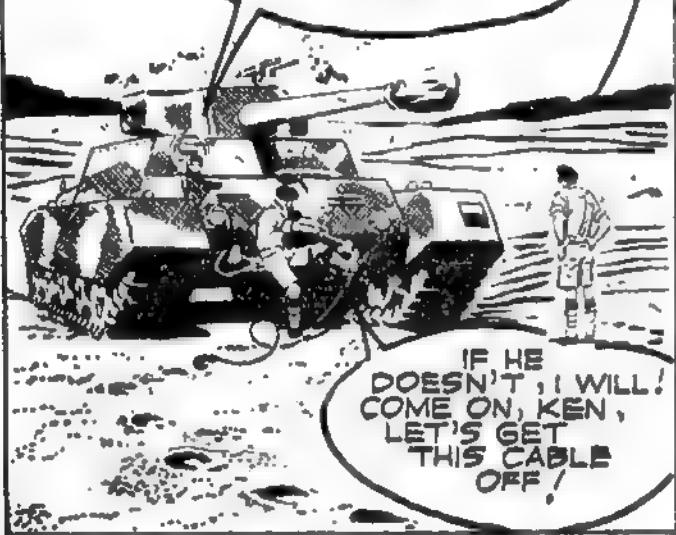
NEVER AGAIN, MATE!
BUT I'LL SAY THIS -
IF I EVER OPEN MY BIG MOUTH ABOUT MISTER CARSON AGAIN, YOU PUT YOUR FOOT IN IT, QUICK!

IF HE DOESN'T, I WILL!
COME ON, KEN,
LET'S GET THIS CABLE OFF!

IT WAS AS THEY FINISHED THAT JOHNNY SUDDENLY REALISED WHAT HAD BEEN NAGGING AT HIS MIND FOR THE LAST FEW SECONDS . . .

THAT ARTILLERY GUNFIRE - IT'S TO THE EAST OF US. THAT MEANS . . .

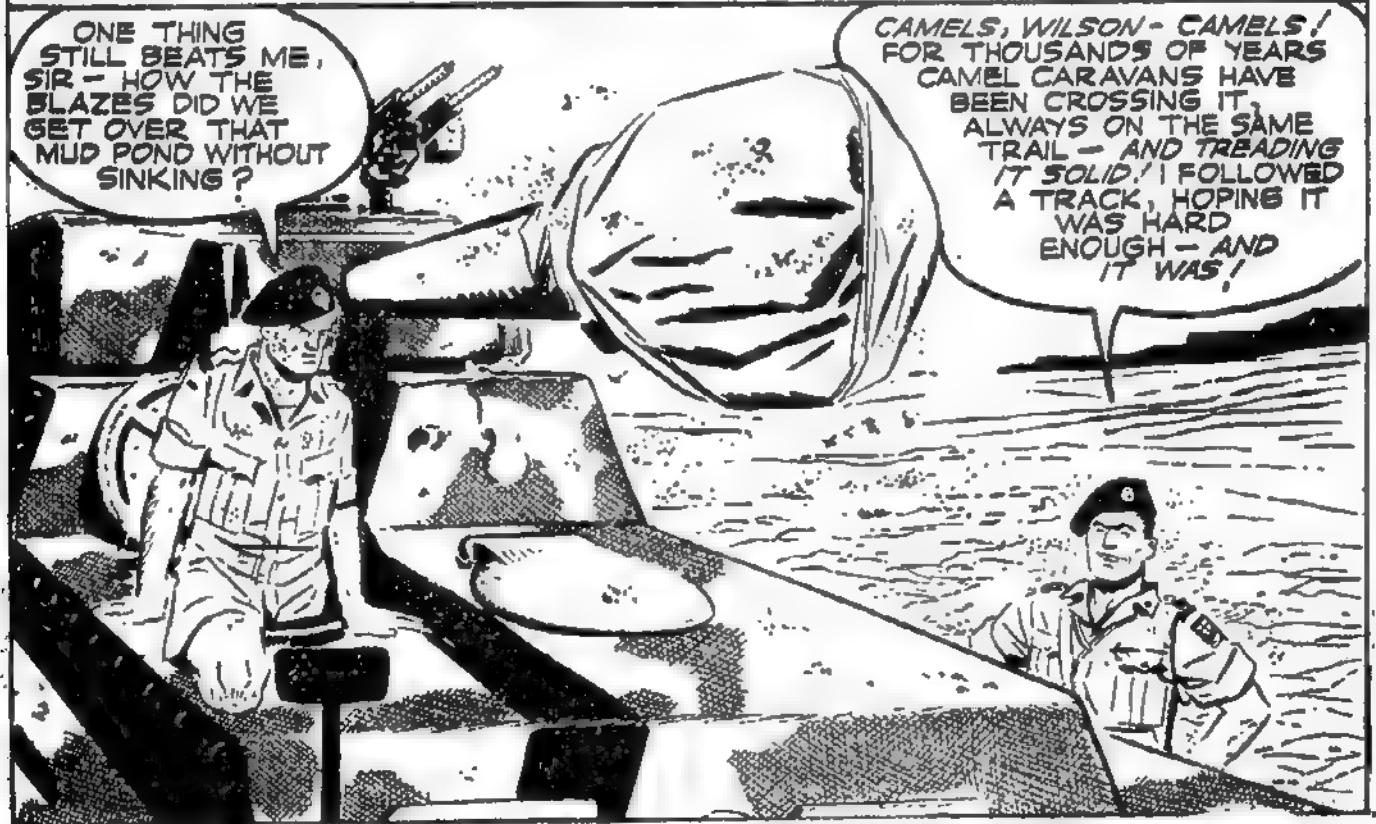
IT MEANS THAT THE EIGHTH ARMY HAVEN'T BROKEN THROUGH YET - SO WE'RE BEHIND THE ENEMY LINES! BUT WE'VE STILL GOT TO FIND FUEL. SO GET GOLIATH STARTED, WE'RE HEADING NORTH, HUNTING FOR THE NEAREST GERMAN SUPPLIES!



NOW THERE SEEMED TO BE A NEW BOND BETWEEN THE FOUR MEN - THE COMRADESHIP WHICH LINKS BRAVE MEN AFTER THEY HAVE FACED THE DEADLIEST OF DANGERS - AND DEFEATED IT! ONLY TUG HAD A QUESTION . . .

ONE THING STILL BEATS ME, SIR - HOW THE BLAZES DID WE GET OVER THAT MUD POND WITHOUT SINKING?

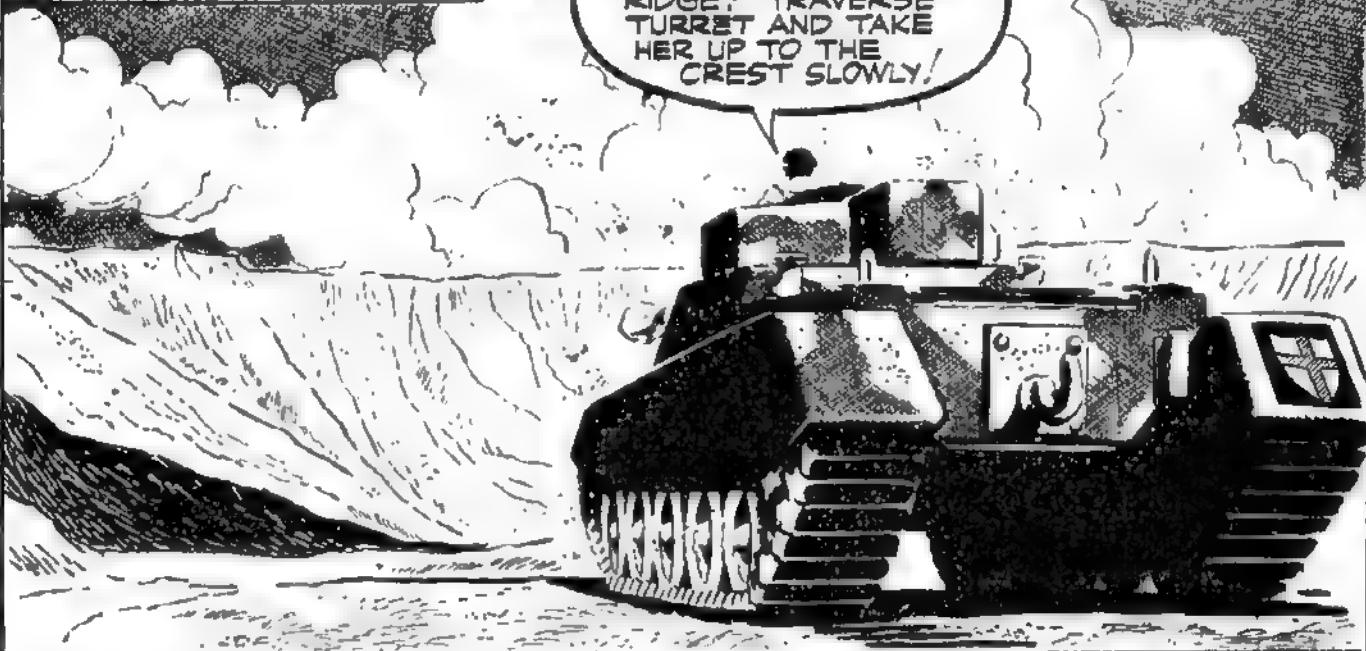
CAMELS, WILSON - CAMELS! FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS CAMEL CARAVANS HAVE BEEN CROSSING IT, ALWAYS ON THE SAME TRAIL - AND TREADING IT SOLID! I FOLLOWED A TRACK, HOPING IT WAS HARD ENOUGH - AND IT WAS!



Chapter 3. FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

THEY HAD ENOUGH PETROL
FOR TWENTY MILES —
FIFTEEN OF THEM WENT
WITHOUT A SIGN OF LIFE —
AND THEN . . .

DEAD
SLOW — THERE'S
SOMETHING UP
AHEAD BEYOND THE
RIDGE! TRAVERSE
TURRET AND TAKE
HER UP TO THE
CREST SLOWLY!



ENGINE RUNNING SOFTLY, GOLIATH CREEPED SLOWLY UP TOWARDS THE CREST. SUDDENLY, CARSON'S SHARP COMMAND BROUGHT A HALT AND JOHNNY SPRANG UP INTO THE TURRET . . .

GLORY
BE, SIR! A JERRY
BATTERY OF EIGHTY
EIGHTS — AND A TROOP
OF TIGERS! LOOKS AS
IF THEY'RE FORMING
A DEFENSIVE
POSITION!

THEN
THE ALAMEIN
LADS MUST HAVE
BROKEN THROUGH!
CORPORAL — SEE THAT
PETROL LORRY? WELL,
THAT'S OURS — AFTER
WE'VE SMASHED
THOSE TIGERS
INTO SCRAP!



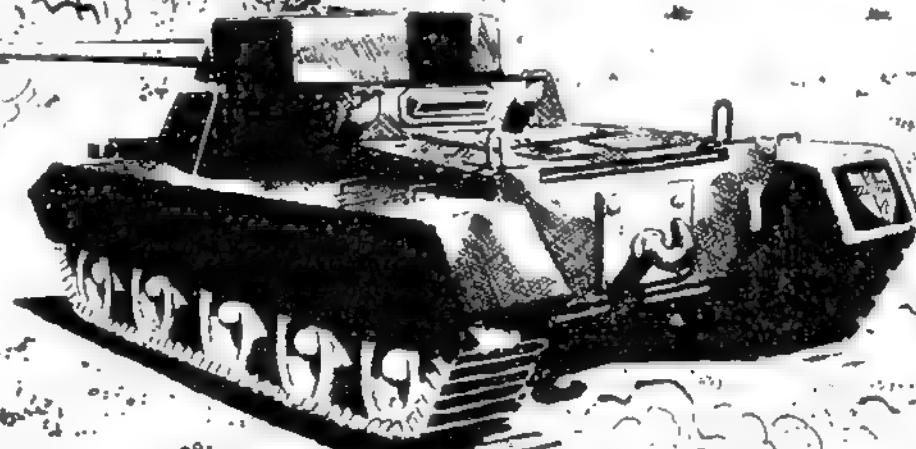
ENTHUSIASTIC GRINS FROM KEN AND TUG ANSWERED CARSON'S QUICK BRIEFING AND HIS SWIFTLY MADE PLAN OF ATTACK. A MINUTE LATER, GOLIATH SURGED FORWARD . . .

SURPRISE
IS ON OUR SIDE -
ALL WE WANT NOW
IS LUCK AND FAST
SHOOTING. LET'S
GO GET
'EM.



THE GERMANS KNEW NOTHING -
UNTIL CARSON'S BROWNINGNS
CHATTERED SAVAGELY . . .
AND IT WAS TOO LATE . . .

THAT'S
STOPPED 'EM
COLD! OKAY, CORPORAL,
LET 'EM HAVE
IT!



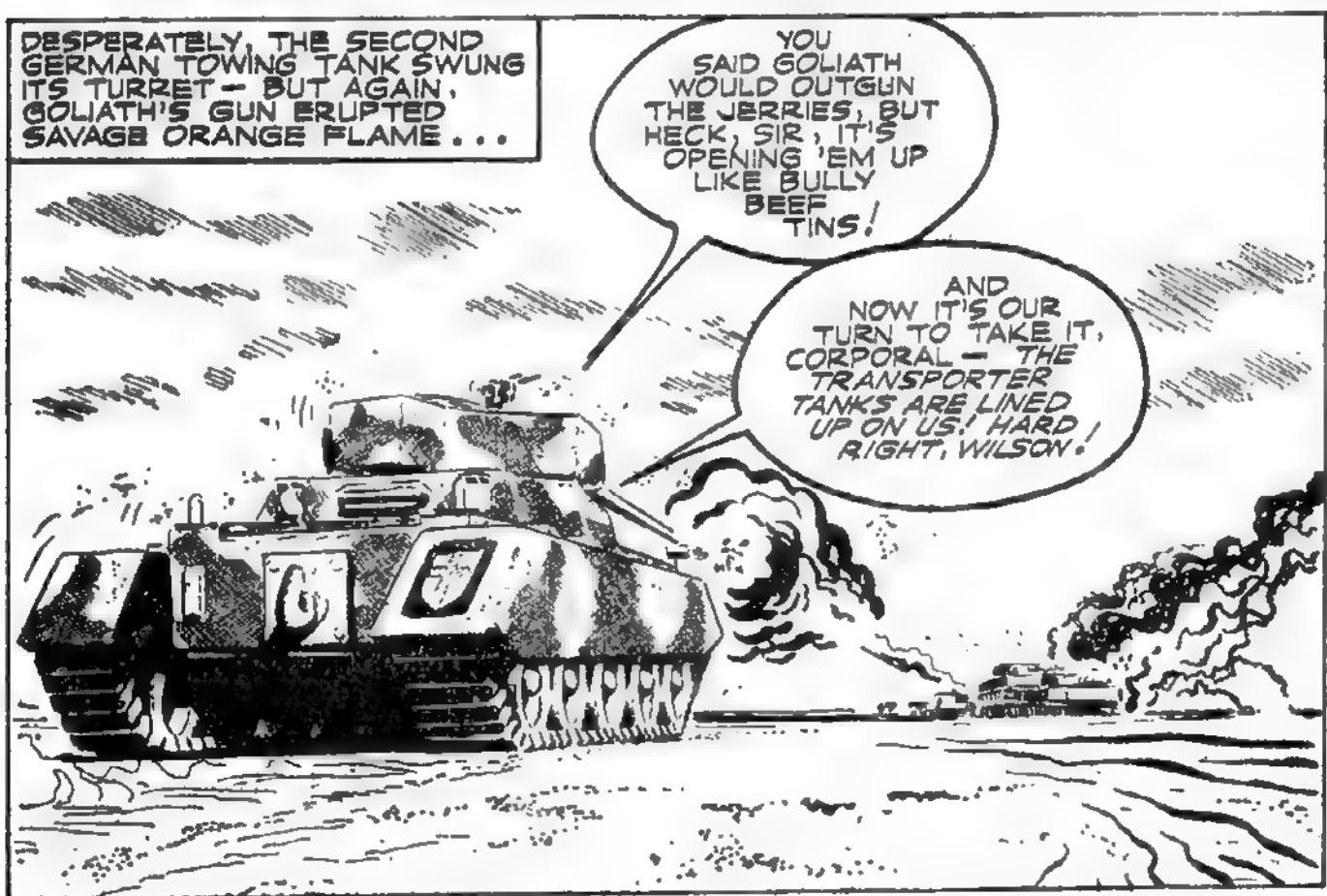
AS THEIR TRAILING TRANSPORTERS' TYRES WERE SLICED OPEN, THE TOWING TIGERS WERE DRAGGED TO A HALT— AND JOHNNY GRAY FILLED HIS SIGHTS WITH THE LEADER . . .



DESPERATELY, THE SECOND GERMAN TOWING TANK SWUNG ITS TURRET— BUT AGAIN, GOLIATH'S GUN ERUPTED SAVAGE ORANGE FLAME . . .

YOU SAID GOLIATH WOULD OUTGUN THE JERRIES, BUT HECK, SIR, IT'S OPENING 'EM UP LIKE BULLY BEEF TINS!

AND NOW IT'S OUR TURN TO TAKE IT, CORPORAL — THE TRANSPORTER TANKS ARE LINED UP ON US! HARD RIGHT, WILSON!



The Iron Fist

GOLIATH SWUNG ROUND VIOLENTLY - A SPLIT SECOND BEFORE THE TWO GERMAN TANKS FIRED. ONE SHELL SCREAMED PAST, A FOOT WIDE - THE OTHER HAMMERED AT THE SLOPING ARMOUR - AND BOUNCED SKYWARDS!

CRIKEY,
I THOUGHT IT
WAS COMING
THROUGH THE
FLIPPING
PERISCOPE !



BEFORE THE TIGERS' GUNNERS
COULD RELOAD, GOLIATH
STRUCK AGAIN . . .
SHATTERINGLY . . .

TURRET TRAVERSE
LEFT! SLAM THE THROTTLE
OPEN, WILSON - WE'RE
GOING TO RAM!



IN THE NICK OF TIME, JOHNNY SWUNG THE TURRET AROUND — AND THEN GOLIATH HIT THE SURVIVING TIGER WITH DEVASTATING POWER . . .

HE'S DOWN AND OUT—
FOR GOOD, NOW
LET'S GET
AFTER THAT PETROL!



WITH THE GRINDING GROANS OF TORTURED METAL, GOLIATH REVERSED OUT OF THE WRECKAGE — AND TUG WILSON GRINNED AS HE SPOTTED THE PETROL TANKER IN FULL FLIGHT A MILE AWAY...

WHAT
ABOUT THE
JERRY GUNS,
SIR?

THEY CAN WAIT UNTIL WE GET
THAT JUICE! SO FAR WE'VE TESTED
EVERYTHING EXCEPT GOLIATH'S
RACING SPEED — WELL,
HERE GOES!



GOLIATH LEAPED AWAY LIKE A HUNTING LEOPARD AFTER ITS PREY. THE ROARING ENGINE THUNDERED TO A NEW PITCH OF FRENZY AS THE SPEEDOMETER NEEDLE CLIMBED . . .



CERTAIN THAT NO TANK COULD MATCH HIS LOADED LORRY'S THIRTY M.P.H., THE GERMAN DRIVER THOUGHT HE WAS WELL CLEAR — UNTIL RIPPLING STREAMS OF FLAMING TRACER LASHED PAST EACH SIDE OF HIS CAB!

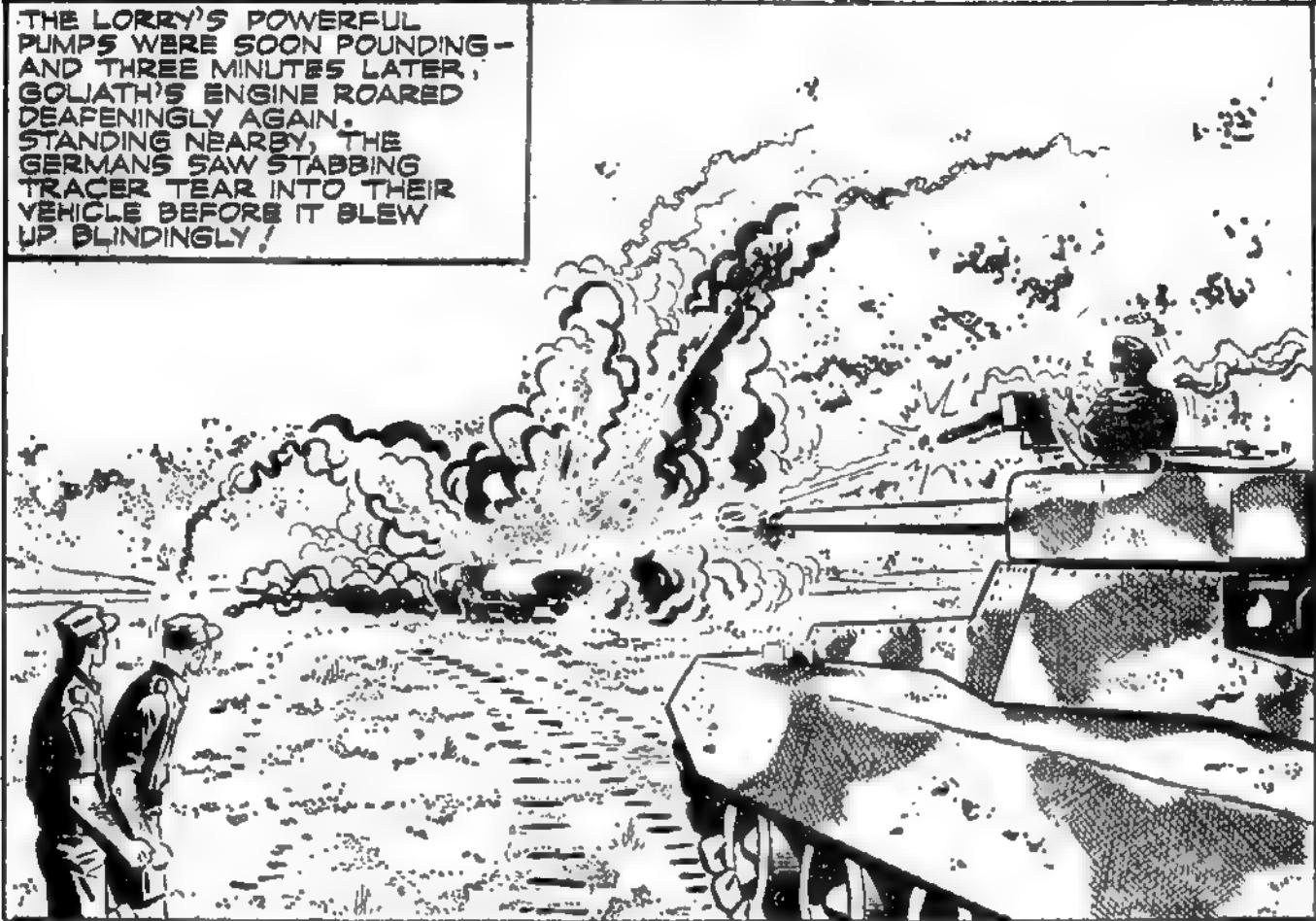
DER TEUFEL! THE BRITISHER TANK HAS CAUGHT UP WITH US! IF THEY SHOOT INTO THE PETROL . . .



TWO WHITE-FACED AND COWED GERMANS WERE WAITING BESIDE THEIR STATIONARY LORRY WHEN GOLIATH RACED UP OUT OF THE DUST CLOUDS . . .

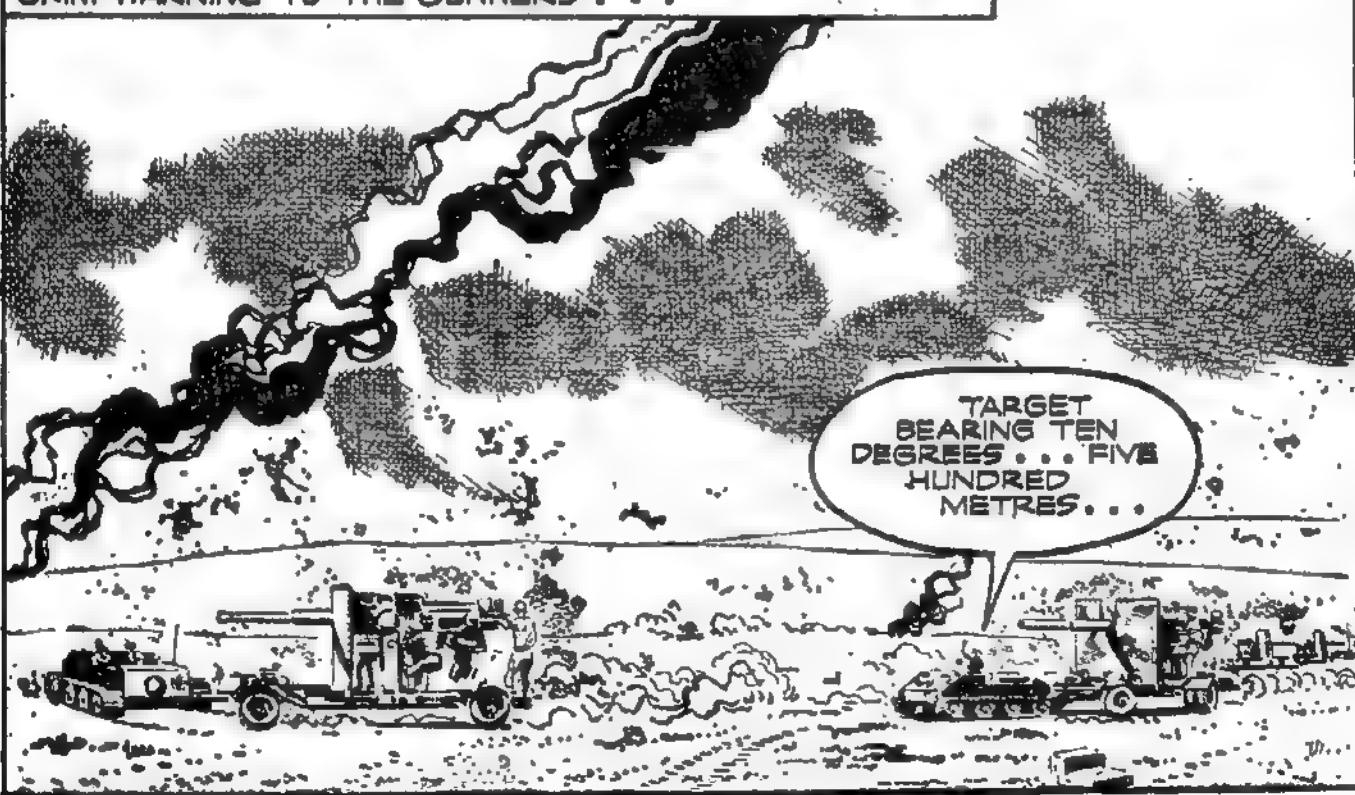


THE LORRY'S POWERFUL PUMPS WERE SOON POUNDING - AND THREE MINUTES LATER, GOLIATH'S ENGINE ROARED DEAFENINGLY AGAIN. STANDING NEARBY, THE GERMANS SAW STABBING TRACER TEAR INTO THEIR VEHICLE BEFORE IT BLEW UP BLINDLY!



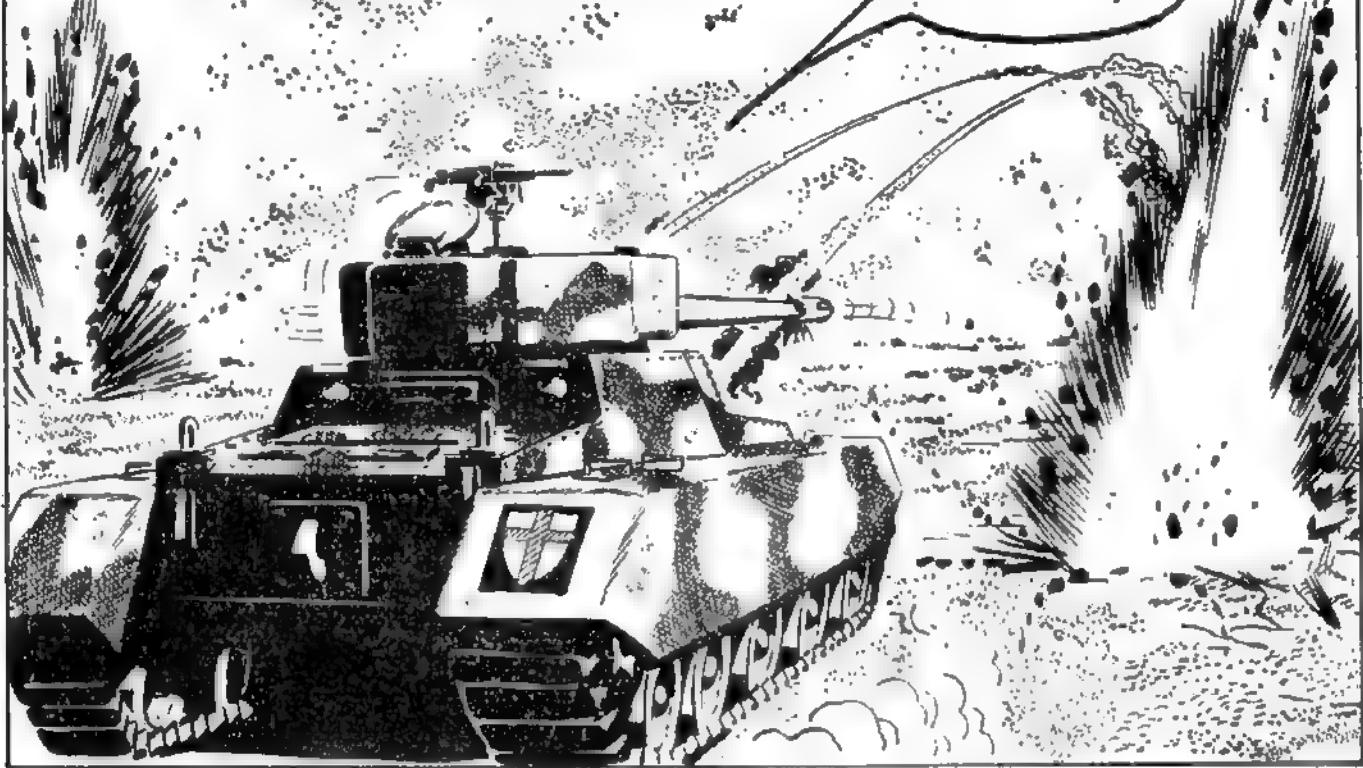
NOW GOLIATH'S OBJECTIVE FOR DESTRUCTION BECAME THE GERMAN 88mm. GUN BATTERY - BUT THE BOILING BLACK PLUME FROM THE EXPLODING TANKER BROUGHT GRIM WARNING TO THE GUNNERS . . .

TARGET
BEARING TEN
DEGREES . . . FIVE
HUNDRED
METRES . . .



TWIN COLUMNS OF SHELL-SCORCHED SAND GEYSERED BESIDE GOLIATH — AND CARSON'S HAND SLAMMED ON A LEVER BELOW THE TURRET RIM. THE NEXT INSTANT TWO MORTAR SMOKE BOMBS ROCKETED AWAY . . .

HARD LEFT TURN, WILSON, AS IF WE WERE ON THE RUN!



AS THE SPEEDING BRITISH TANK SPUN AWAY, DENSE CLOUDS OF SWIRLING SMOKE ROLLED IN FRONT OF THE GUN LINE, MASKING IT COMPLETELY . . .

LUCKY FOR THE BRITISHER HE SCUTTLED FOR SAFETY — ANOTHER HUNDRED METRES AND WE WOULD HAVE SMASHED HIM INTO THE DUST!

HIMMEL! KEEP QUIET, DOLTS — THAT TANK ENGINE IS COMING CLOSER AGAIN!



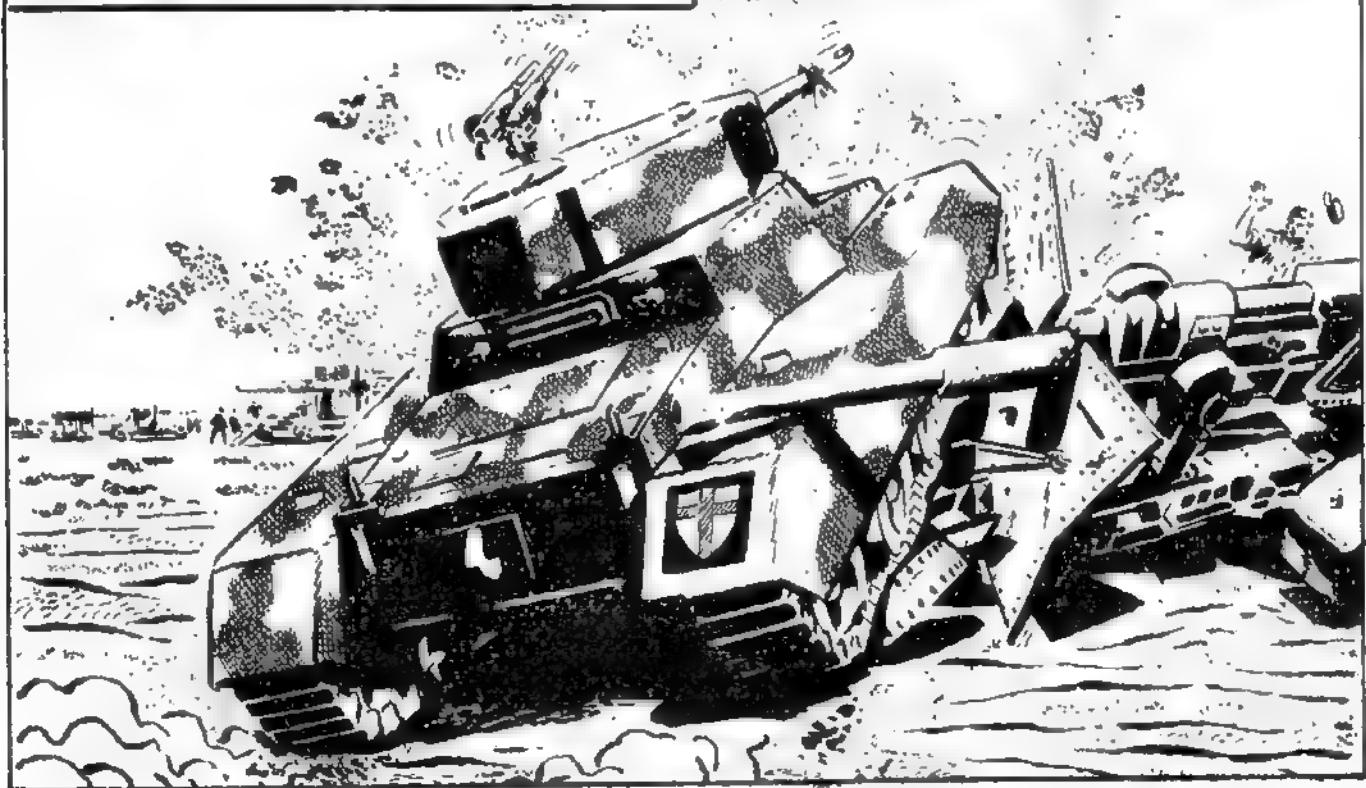
The Iron Fist

THE GERMAN OFFICER WAS RIGHT — THE GRINDING HUM GREW TO AIR-TREMBLING THUNDER — AND THEN, SUDDENLY IT HAPPENED!

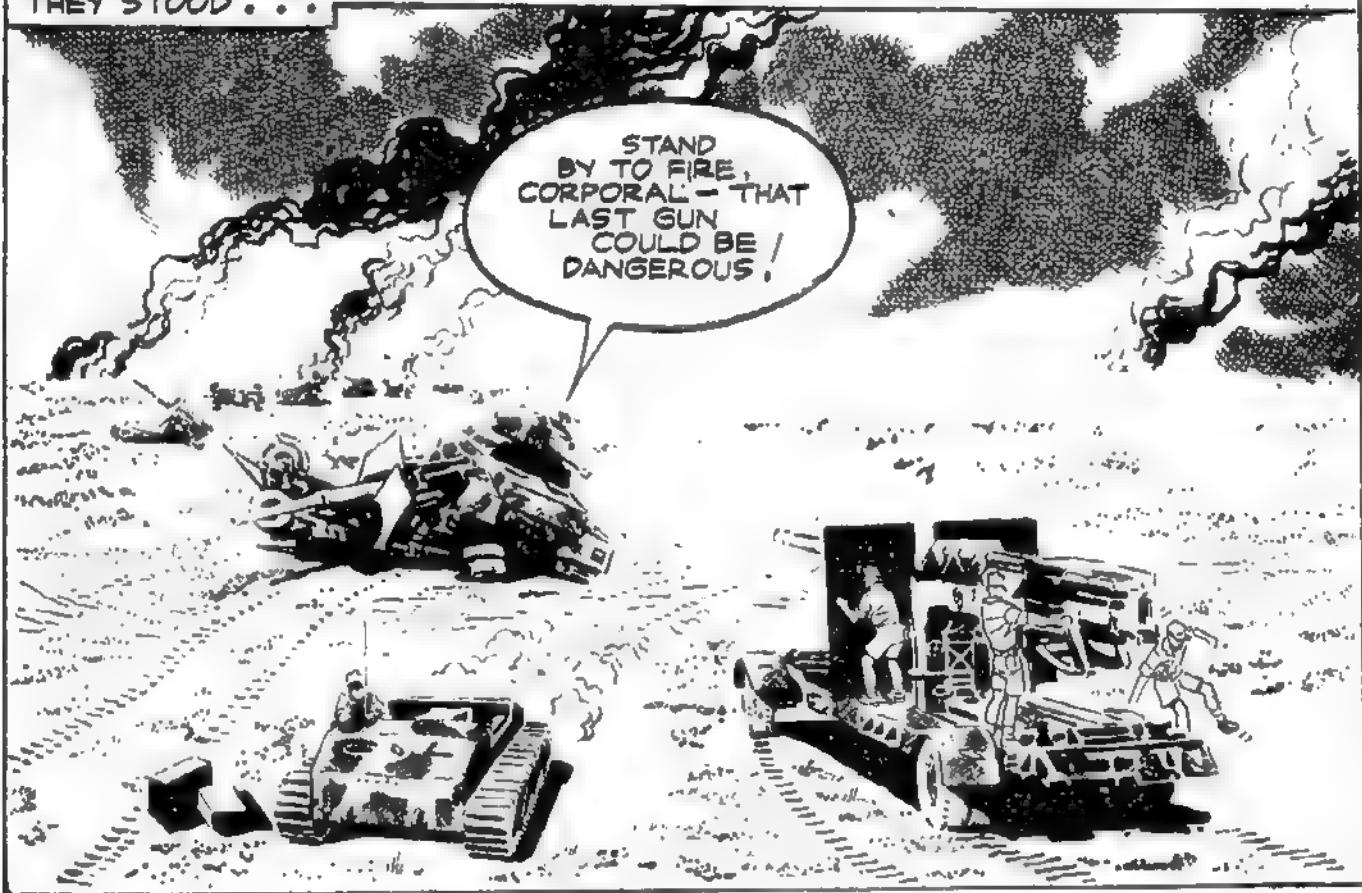
DONNERWETTER —
SWING THAT GUN
AROUND, BLOCKHEADS —
SCHNELL . . .
SCHNELL . . .



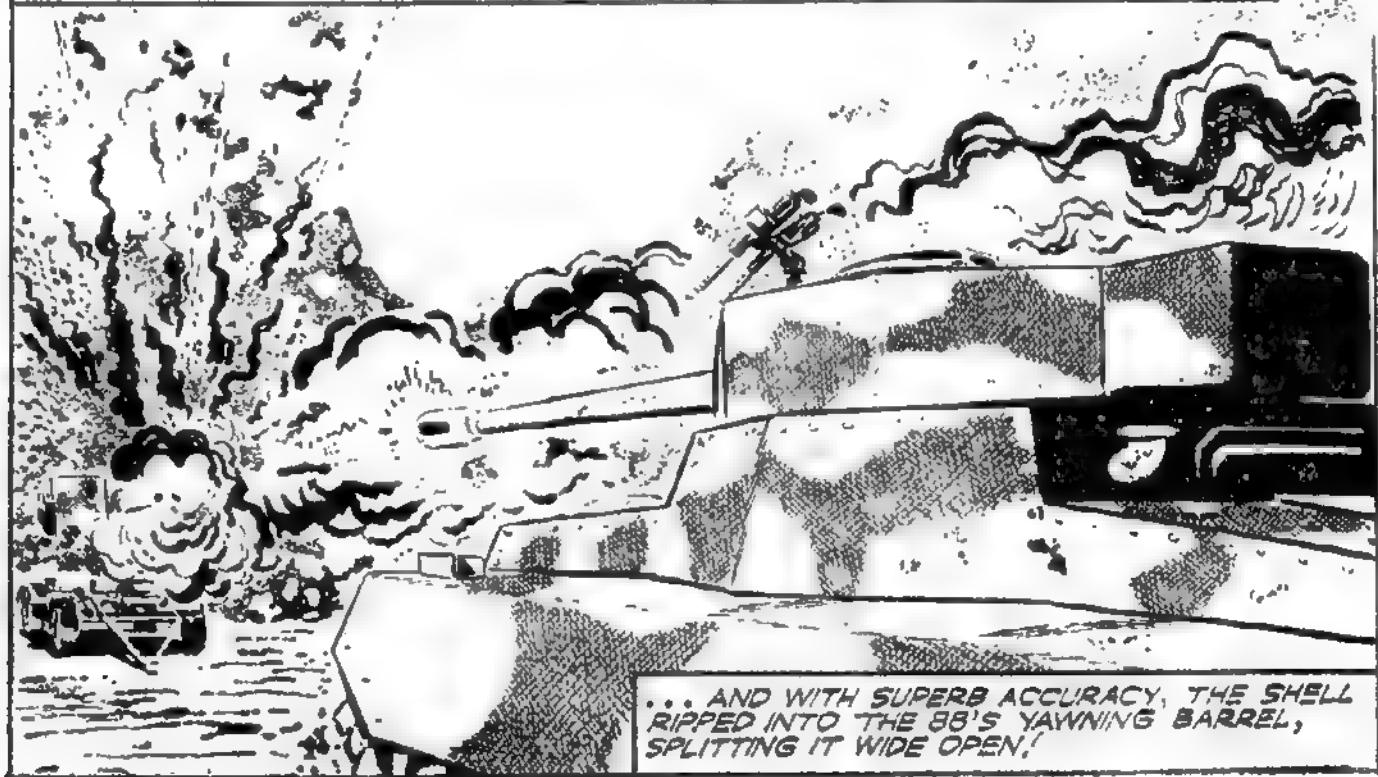
THE GUNNERS MADE A FEEBLE TRY . . . AND KNEW THEY WOULD FAIL. NOTHING COULD STOP THAT CHARGING COLOSSUS OF STEEL WHICH REARED OVER THEM. AS ONE, THEY FLED . . .



BUT THE 88S WERE TOO CUMBERSOME FOR FAST RIGHT ANGLE SWITCHES — AND ONE BY ONE, GOLIATH'S GRINDING TRACKS CRUMPLED THEM WHERE THEY STOOD . . .



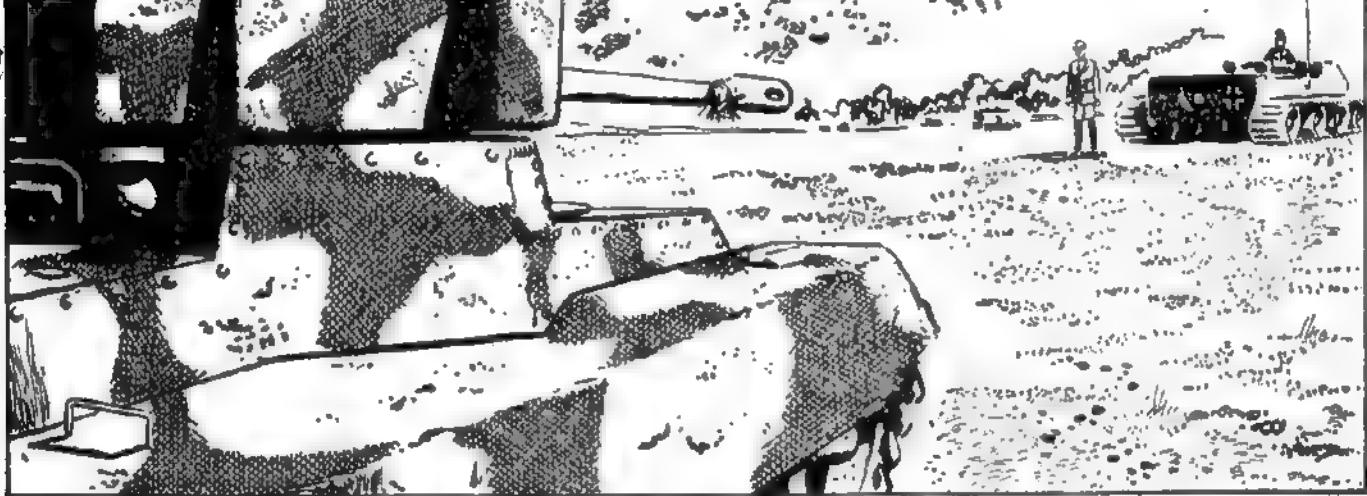
DRIVEN BY THE LASHING TONGUE OF THEIR BRAVE YOUNG LIEUTENANT, THE SWEATING GERMAN GUN CREW MADE ONE LAST EFFORT — AND THE 88mm. GUN TURNED! IT WAS DEAD IN LINE — THEN JOHNNY FIRED . . .



DAZED AND SHOCKED BY THE BLAST, THE GUN CREW STAGGERED AWAY — AS CARSON PUSHED OPEN THE TURRET HATCHES . . .

THEY'VE HAD ENOUGH, SIR — AND AFTER THAT LAST PUNCH, I CAN'T BLAME 'EM!

THAT YOUNG LIEUTENANT OF THEIRS HAS THE COURAGE THAT HAS GOT TO BE ADMIRED. WITH TEN LIKE HIM, THEY MIGHT HAVE STOPPED US! WELL, WE CAN'T TAKE PRISONERS, SO WE'LL LET 'EM GO!



GOLIATH RUMBLED IN A HALF TURN — AND IN THAT INSTANT, JOHNNY'S KEEN, SEARCHING EYES WIDENED . . .

LOOK, SIR — DUST CLOUDS COMING TOWARDS US, AND THEY'RE REALLY MOVING!

TANKS, I'LL BET — BUT WHOSE? RETREATING PANZERS — OR BREAKTHROUGH BRITISH?



WITH EVERY TAUT NERVE KEYED FOR SPLIT SECOND ACTION, THEY WAITED AS THE DUST CLOUDS RACED TOWARDS THEM — NEARER . . . NEARER . . .

THEY'RE SHERMANS!

DON'T RECOGNISE THE SHAPE, BUT SHE'S GOT NO PANZER MARKINGS — AND GREAT SCOTT, THERE ARE TWO BLACK BERETS IN THE TURRET! SHE'S ONE OF OURS!



THE SPEEDING SHERMANS STREAMED PAST WITH A CASUAL WAVE OF THE LEADER'S HAND. THEN GOLIATH BEGAN THE RUN EAST THAT WAS TO TAKE HER, HOURS LATER, THROUGH THE GREAT BATTLEFIELD AT ALAMEIN...

GOOD GRIEF, SIR — IT'S A TANK GRAVEYARD!

ROMMEL'S DIVISIONS MUST HAVE BEEN SHATTERED HERE — AND HE'LL NEVER RECOVER. ALAMEIN IS THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR THE AFRIKA KORPS!



The Iron Fist

MILITARY POLICE DIRECTED THEM TO THE SQUADRON COMMAND VEHICLES, NOW BROUGHT FORWARD TO AN ADVANCED H.Q. WHILE CARSON MADE HIS REPORT, GOLIATH WAS LOADED ON TO A TRANSPORTER . . .

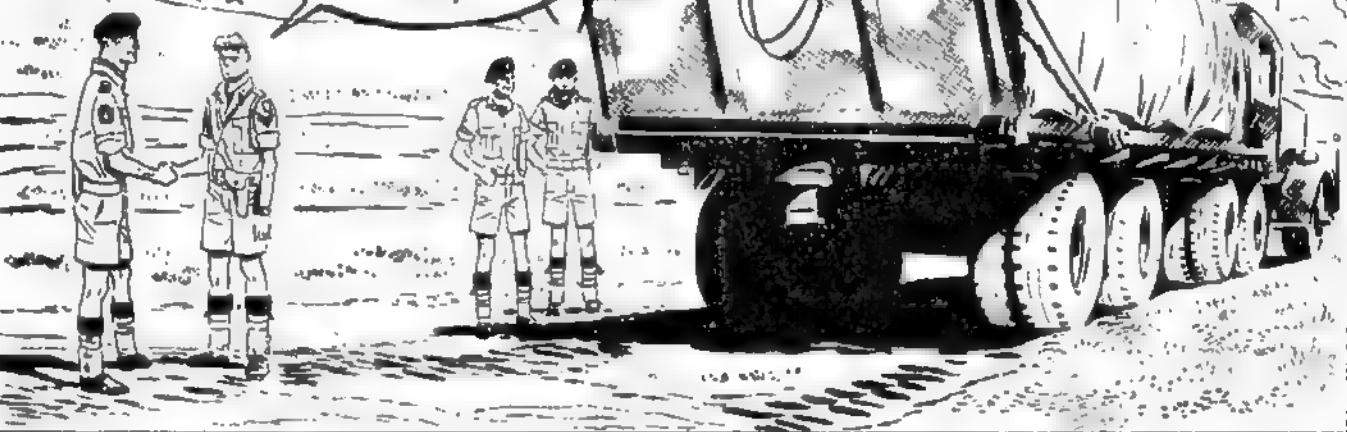


CHUCKLING SOFTLY, LIEUTENANT MARK CARSON SHOOK HANDS WITH TUG, KEN AND FINALLY JOHNNY . . .

AND, CORPORAL, I'VE RECOMMENDED TO YOUR C.O. THAT YOU GET COMMAND OF THE NEXT AVAILABLE SHERMAN — PLUS THE STRIPE THAT GOES WITH IT! WILSON AND BYRNE WILL STAY AS YOUR CREW!

THANK YOU, SIR — THEY'RE THE BEST TEAM I COULD HOPE FOR!

GOODBYE, GOLIATH, YOU BEAUTIFUL BRUTE — THE JERRIES WON'T FORGET YOU IN A HURRY, AND NEITHER WILL WE!



SOON AFTERWARDS, THE TRANSPORTER ROLLED AWAY. GOLIATH HAD STARTED ITS LONG JOURNEY BACK TO ENGLAND, AND THREE MEN WATCHED IT GO, THEIR FACES SOMBRE . . .

THEY'RE QUITE A TEAM, THOSE TWO — GOLIATH AND THAT CHAP, CARSON!

YOU'RE DARNED RIGHT! HECK — AS SOON AS I GET TO LIKE THE BLOKE AS MUCH AS GOLIATH, THEY BOTH SCARPER!



The Iron Fist

WITHIN TWENTY FOUR HOURS, JOHNNY GRAY WAS PROMOTED SERGEANT AND GIVEN COMMAND OF A NEW SHERMAN. ONE OF THE LATEST MODELS, IT WAS DESTINED TO BECOME THEIR CRAMPED AND EVER MOVING HOME FOR SIX MONTHS OF FIGHTING AS THE VICTORIOUS EIGHTH ARMY BATTLED WESTWARDS FOR A THOUSAND MILES. TOBRUK . . . BENGHAZI . . . SOUSSE . . . ALL FELL . . .



... UNTIL FINALLY TUNIS, THE LAST ENEMY STRONGHOLD, SURRENDERED — AND THE GERMAN ARMY IN NORTH AFRICA HAD BEEN COMPLETELY SMASHED!

TWO MONTHS LATER, AFTER REFITTING, THEY WERE LEADING AN ARMoured SPEARHEAD IN THE INVASION OF SICILY . . .

NOT MUCH RESISTANCE SO FAR — MAYBE WE'VE CAUGHT JERRY'S DEFENCES ON THE HOP. IF WE CAN KEEP 'EM STAGGERING, WE'LL CHASE 'EM OFF THE ISLAND BEFORE THEY RECOVER!



IT TOOK SEVEN WEEKS OF COUNTLESS SMALL BATTLES TO CONQUER SICILY—
AND IMMEDIATELY PLANS WERE MADE FOR THE INVASION OF ITALY. ON
SEPTEMBER 3RD, 1943, THE ALLIED ONSLAUGHT BEGAN . . .



AGAIN THE LANDING WAS SUCCESSFUL—
AND THE LONG SLOGGING FIGHT UP THE
LENGTH OF ITALY BEGAN. ALTHOUGH
ITALY SURRENDERED, THE GERMAN
FORCES FOUGHT A RELENTLESS WAR
OF SLOW RETREAT . . .

STRIKE ME PINK — ANOTHER FLIPPIN' MOUNTAIN BARRIER FOR THEM JERRIES TO SIT ON — AND WE'VE GOT TO KNOCK 'EM OFF!



The Iron Fist

SO THEY CRAWLED NORTHWARDS - AND EVERY INCH OF GROUND WAS A HARD WON VICTORY. THEN, SOUTH OF ROME, THE SHERMAN LOST TWO CREW MEMBERS - BUT NOT IN BATTLE . . .

BYRNE AND WILSON — YOU'RE BOTH APPOINTED LANCE CORPORALS FOR POSTING! BYRNE GOES TO "C" SQUADRON H.Q. AS COMMAND VEHICLE SIGNALLER. WILSON GOES TO "A" SQUADRON AS G.O.'S DRIVER! GET YOUR KIT PACKED, AND MOVE! SERGEANT, REPLACEMENTS FOR THESE TWO WILL BE SENT TO YOU TODAY!



WHEN A TEAM OF MEN HAVE LIVED AND FOUGHT TOGETHER THROUGH MANY HAZARDS AND PERILS, A BREAK-UP COMES HARD AND UNPOPULAR . . .

I DIDN'T ASK FOR NO DARNED STRIPE- AND I DON'T BLOOMIN' WELL WANT IT . . . NOR A TRANSFER!

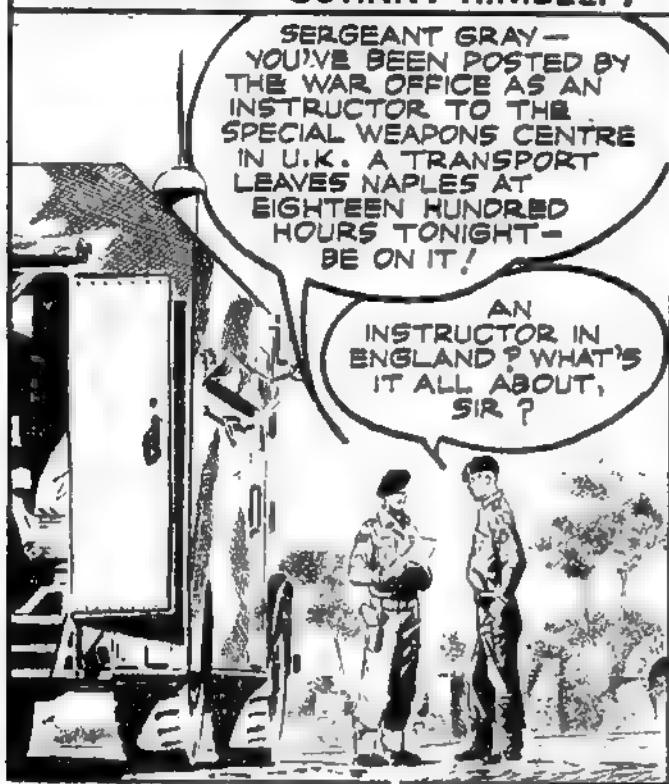
NEITHER DO I, TUG — BUT SOME BRASSHAT SAYS 'JUMP' SO WE 'JUMP'!

I'D BE GLAD TO BE GETTING RID OF YOU TWO DEADBEATS — IF YOU WEREN'T THE BEST DRIVER AND RADIO-OP IN THE REGIMENT!

IL DUCE HA SEMPRE RAGION



SOON AFTER THAT, JOHNNY WAS IN ACTION AGAIN WITH HIS NEW CREW. THEY WERE GOOD MEN - BUT NOT OF THE CALIBRE OF TUG AND KEN. THEN CAME THE NEXT VICTIM OF THE "BRASSHATS" - JOHNNY HIMSELF!



BUT THE OFFICER COULD TELL HIM NO MORE. HE WAS STILL WONDERING WHEN HE REACHED NAPLES LATE THAT AFTERNOON . . .

TRANSPORT FOR U.K.? THAT'S HER OUT THERE ON THE REAR END OF THE CONVOY. THERE'S A MOTOR LAUNCH FURTHER ALONG THE WHARF TAKING MEN OUT TO HER.

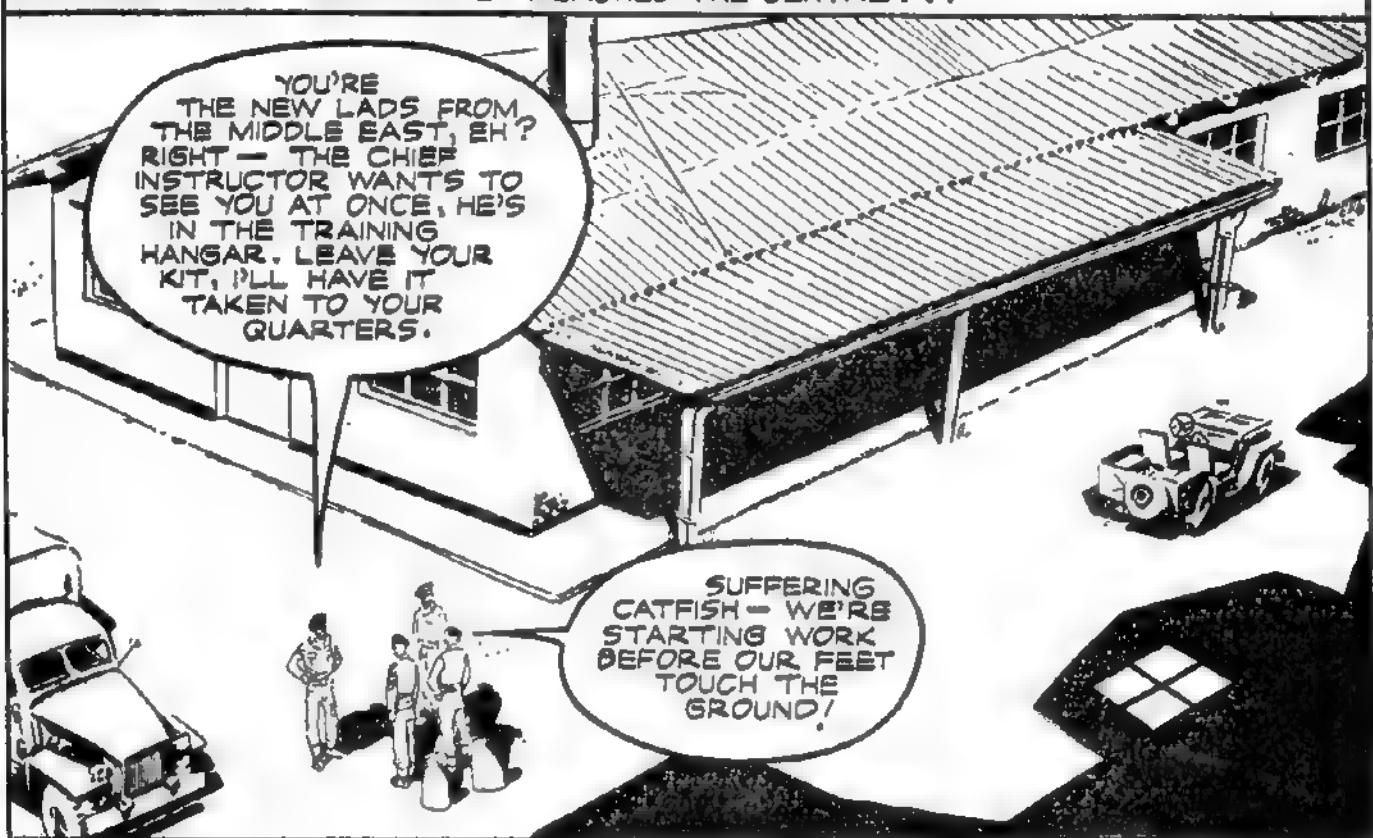


THE MOTOR LAUNCH WAS JUST LEAVING THE WHARF WHEN JOHNNY JUMPED ABOARD - AND WITHIN MINUTES, HE WAS CLIMBING ABOARD THE TROOPSHIP... FOR A VERY SPECIAL WELCOME...

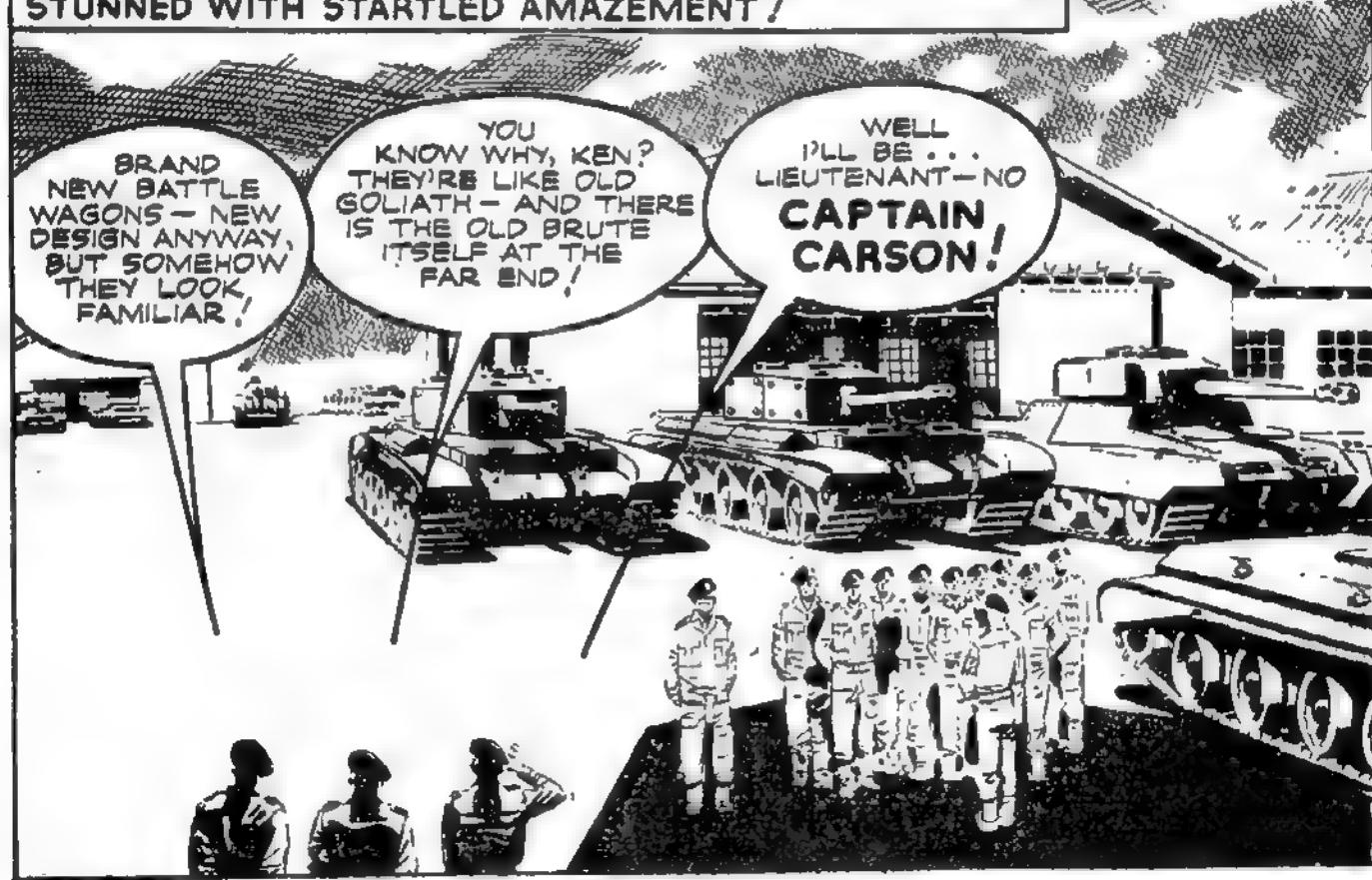


The Iron Fist

MANY TIMES DURING THE THREE WEEK VOYAGE HOME, THEY TRIED WITHOUT SUCCESS TO FATHOM THE CAUSE FOR THEIR POSTINGS. THEY WERE STILL PUZZLED WHEN THEY FINALLY REACHED THE CENTRE . . .



AS THEY APPROACHED THE HANGER, THEY SUDDENLY STOPPED, STUNNED WITH STARTLED AMAZEMENT!

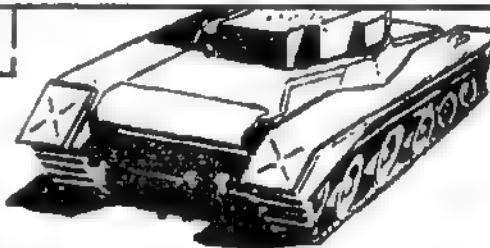


RETURNING THEIR SALUTES, CARSON COULDN'T KEEP THE BROAD GRIN OFF HIS STRONG FEATURES . . .

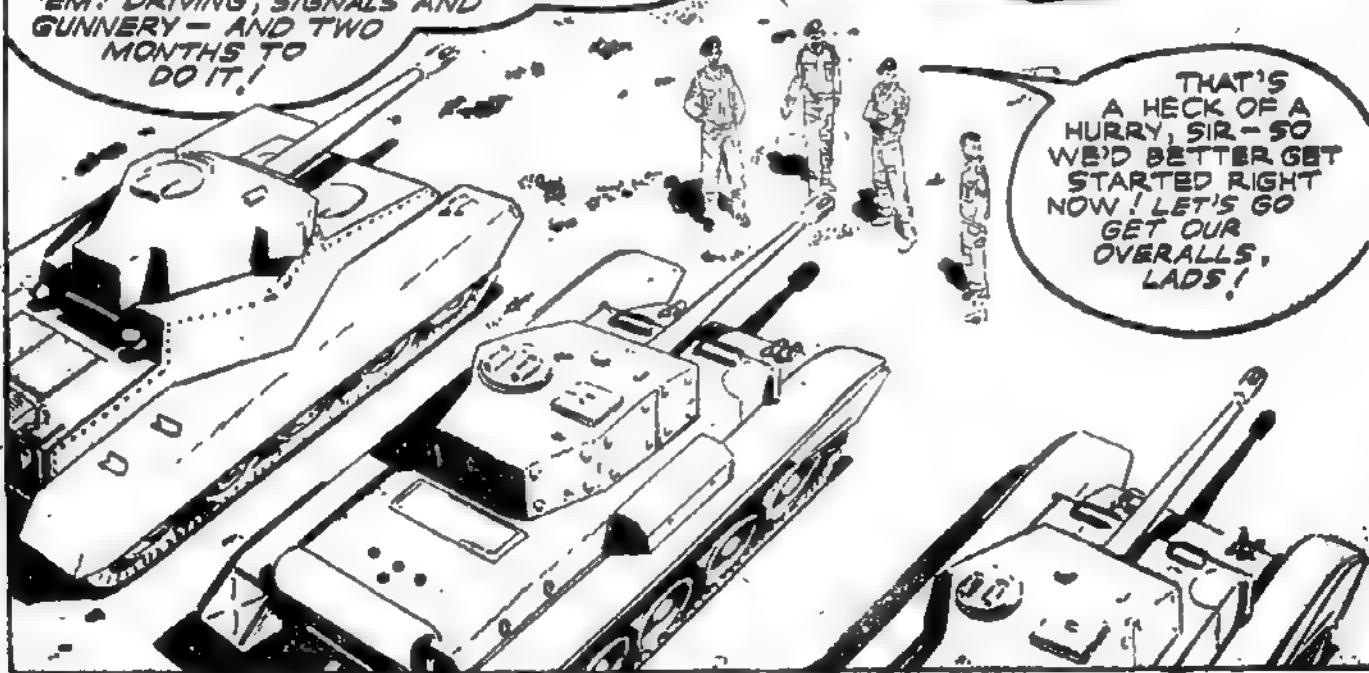


SIGNING FOR THEM TO FOLLOW, MARK CARSON WALKED TOWARDS THE NEW TANK . . .

USING THE LESSONS WE LEARNED IN GOLIATH'S TRIALS, WE'VE DEVELOPED THESE LATEST IMPROVED VERSIONS - FASTER, HEAVIER ARMOURED AND WITH LONGER RANGE. YOUR JOBS ARE TO TEACH THE CREW HOW TO FIGHT IN 'EM! DRIVING, SIGNALS AND GUNNERY - AND TWO MONTHS TO DO IT!



THAT'S A HECK OF A HURRY, SIR - SO WE'D BETTER GET STARTED RIGHT NOW! LET'S GO GET OUR OVERALLS, LADS!



Chapter 4. BEACH OF DEATH

THEY HAD A BIG TASK TO CARRY OUT - COMPRESSING MONTHS OF EXPERIENCE INTO WEEKS OF INSTRUCTION. THEY WERE HARD AT IT DAY AFTER DAY.

TUG WITH HIS DRIVING . . .

DON'T SLOW DOWN! YOU'VE GOT TO
KEEP SPEED UP TO BOUNCE OVER THEM
DRAGONS TEETH - OTHERWISE
YOU'LL LOSE A TRACK -
AND GET
CLOBBERED!



... WHILE KEN POUNDED THE LATEST SIGNALS TRAINING INTO THE PUPILS . . .

THE WIRELESS SETS ARE THE NERVE CENTRES OF THE TANK FORMATIONS. THEY WELD EVERY SINGLE FIGHTING UNIT INTO A COMBAT TEAM - ENABLING THEM TO CHANGE PLANS ON THE SPOT TO MEET THE ENEMY'S MOVES.



... AND JOHNNY GRAY TURNED THEM INTO EXPERT GUNNERS . . .

NOT BAD, SERGEANT -
BUT TOO HIGH TO GIVE AN
ENEMY CREW MORE THAN A
STIFF HEADACHE! AIM BETWEEN
THE TRACKS OR AT THE
TURRET CHASSIS JOINT!
TAKE IT AGAIN!



THERE WAS LITTLE TIME FOR RELAXATION — BUT WHEN THEY HAD ANY, SOMEHOW THEY ALWAYS FOUND THEMSELVES IN THE HANGAR, WITH GOLIATH!

SHE'S
IN FIRST
CLASS
CONDITION—
REALLY FIGHTING
FIT!

THOSE GEEZERS
CAN SAY WHAT THEY
LIKE ABOUT THEM NEW
JOBS — NOT ONE OF
'EM COULD HOLD A
CANDLE TO OLD
GOLIATH IN
ACTION!



THEIR ALLOCATED TRAINING TIME WAS ALMOST UP, WHEN ONE MORNING, MARK CARSON CALLED THEM ALL TO A MEETING IN THE HANGAR. WITH HIM WAS A TANK CORPS MAJOR . . .

WELL, CHAPS, THIS IS IT!
YOUR TRAINING IS OVER — THE TANKS WILL BE LOADED TONIGHT AND TOMORROW YOU WILL PROCEED TO A SOUTH COAST TOWN, TO AWAIT FURTHER ORDERS!



The Iron Fist

LEAVING ALDERS TO ISSUE HIS INSTRUCTIONS, CARSON TURNED AWAY — TO MEET THREE BELLIGERENTLY QUESTIONING FACES . . .



UTTERLY FED UP, THEY GOT ON WITH PREPARING THE TANKS FOR DEPARTURE — AND THEY JUST HAD THEM LOADED WHEN JOHNNY GOT THE FLASH OF INSPIRATION THAT TOOK THEM HOTFOOT TO CARSON'S OFFICE . . .



COMPLETELY PUZZLED, CARSON STARED AT THEM — THEN UNDERSTANDING GREW IN HIS EYES . . . A HAND FLASHED TO THE PHONE . . .



The Iron Fist

47

THEY WAITED OUTSIDE - AND FOR TEN MINUTES HEARD THE SOMETIMES PERSUASIVE, SOMETIMES FORCEFUL, TONES OF CARSON'S VOICE. THEN AT LAST...

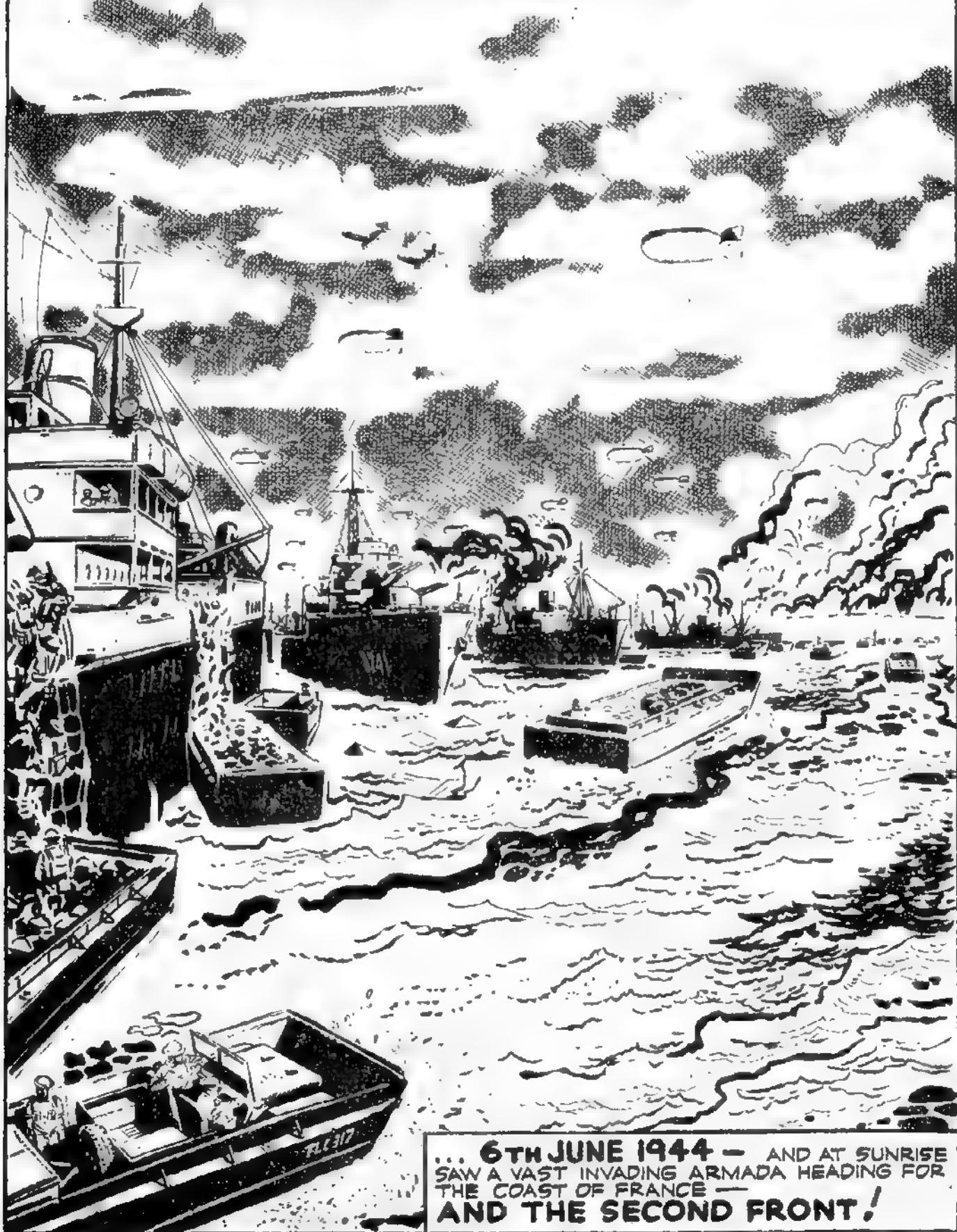


SO IT WAS, THAT FOUR TANK TRANSPORTERS HEADED SOUTHWARDS THAT NIGHT, MERGING IN THE CLOAKING DARKNESS WITH THE THICK RIVERS OF ARMY VEHICLES FLOWING ON THE SAME ROUTES. BEFORE DAWN THEY HAD PASSED INTO A HEAVILY GUARDED PORT . . .



The Iron Fist

IT WAS, IN FACT, ONLY A MATTER OF HOURS — FOR THE FOLLOWING DAY'S DATE WAS TO BECOME WRITTEN IN FIRE IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD...



... 6TH JUNE 1944 — AND AT SUNRISE
SAW A VAST INVADING ARMADA HEADING FOR
THE COAST OF FRANCE —
AND THE SECOND FRONT!

ALL NIGHT, BRITISH WARSHIPS HAD HAMMERED THE GERMAN DEFENCES — AND WITH FIRST LIGHT THE LANDING CRAFT WENT IN. AGAINST FURIOUS ENEMY OPPOSITION, THE FIRST BEACHES WERE TAKEN . . .

FIVE MINUTES TO GO, SIR. LOOKS AS IF WE'LL HAVE TO BATTER OUR WAY OFF THE BEACH, TOO!

WE'LL NEVER GET THERE IF THAT JERRY GUN BUNKER ISN'T KNOCKED OUT FIRST — BUT THE NAVY'S SHELLS ARE JUST BOUNCING OFF!



CARSON'S EYES NARROWED — THEN, SNAPPING QUICK ORDERS TO JOHNNY, HE LEAPED TO THE ROYAL MARINE HELMSMAN . . . AND A MOMENT LATER THE ASSAULT CRAFT'S BOWS SWUNG ROUND . . .

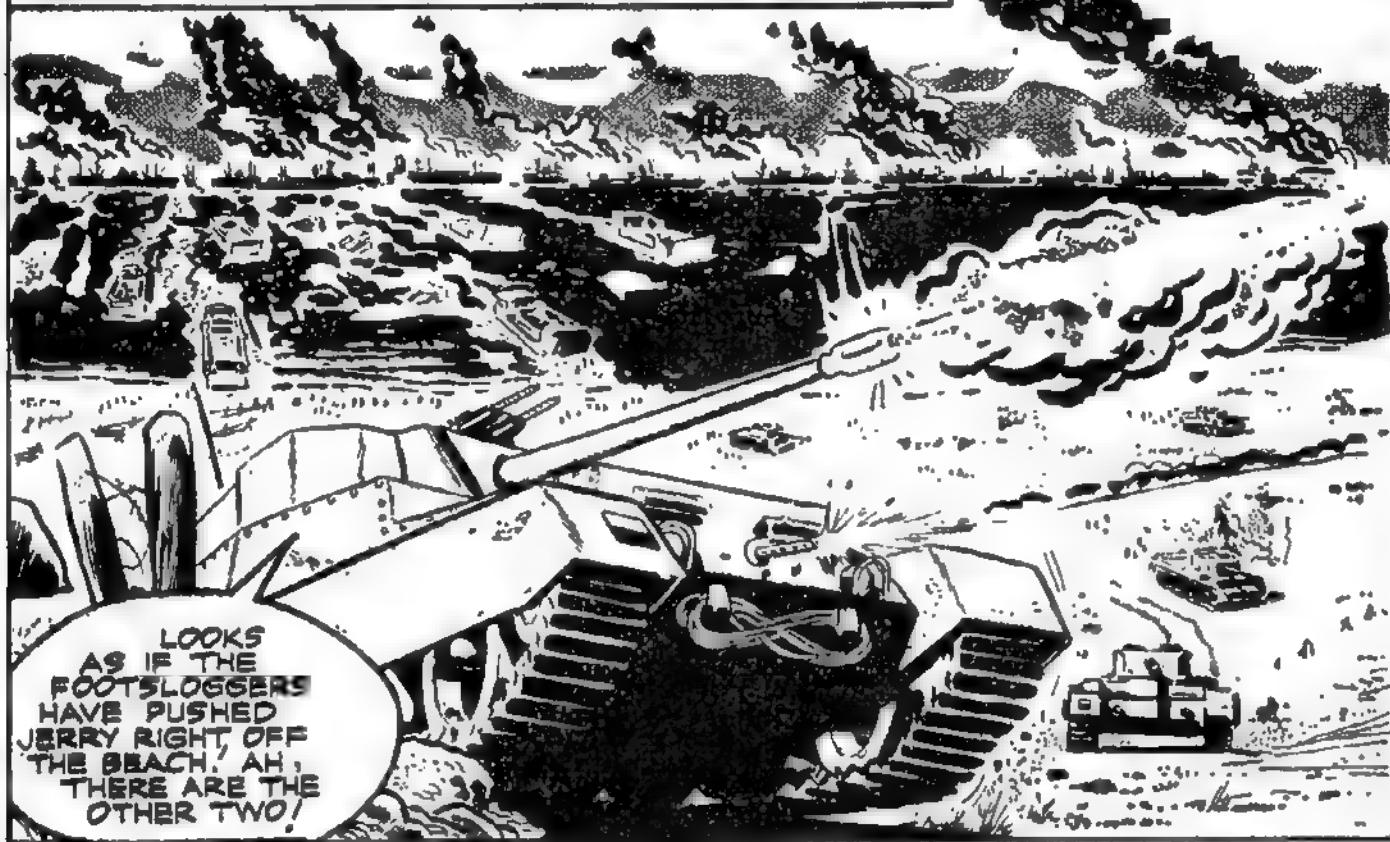
STAND BY, CORPORAL! YOU'VE ONLY GOT A SECOND TO AIM AND FIRE — IF YOU MISS, WE'VE HAD IT!



The Iron Fist



WITH A GRINDING CRUNCH, THE INVADING CRAFT GROUNDED AND THE RAMP DROPPED. WITH SPLIT SECOND TIMING, GOLIATH ROARED UP THE BEACH...



AT FULL SPEED, THE TWO STEEL MONSTERS RACED PAST CARSON... AND THE VOICE OF MAJOR ALDERS, THE TROOP C.O., CAME CRACKLING ACROSS THE RADIO... .



FIVE RACING, ROARING MINUTES ACROSS SHELL PLUNDERED FIELDS AND THEY FOUND THE INFANTRY — MENACED BY ONE OF THE MOST FIENDISH WEAPONS OF WAR!

THE FLAME THROWER!



IN TWO PAIRS THE TANKS LUNGED FORWARD — STRAIGHT TOWARDS THE FLAME THROWER! IT WAS A MAD, DEATH-DEFYING CHARGE . . .
AND THEY PAID THE FEARFUL PRICE!



SOMEHOW THE CREW OF THE FLAMING HULK SCRAMBLED SAFELY FROM THE BLAZING FURNACE AS THE THREE SURVIVING TANKS TURNED IN RETREAT. INSIDE GOLIATH, CARSON'S BRAIN WORKED SWIFTLY . . .



WRENCHING HARD ON THE STEERING, TUG SLAMMED THROUGH THE GEARS. GOLIATH SPUN— AND BEGAN TO GRIND UP THE FORTY FIVE DEGREE SLOPE. A LONG FINGER OF FIRE LICKED OUT FROM THE PILL BOX . . .

BY
GLORY, CARSON'S GOING TO GET AWAY WITH IT, BECAUSE THE FLAME THROWER CAN'T ELEVATE AND TRAVERSE FAST ENOUGH TO CATCH HIM!

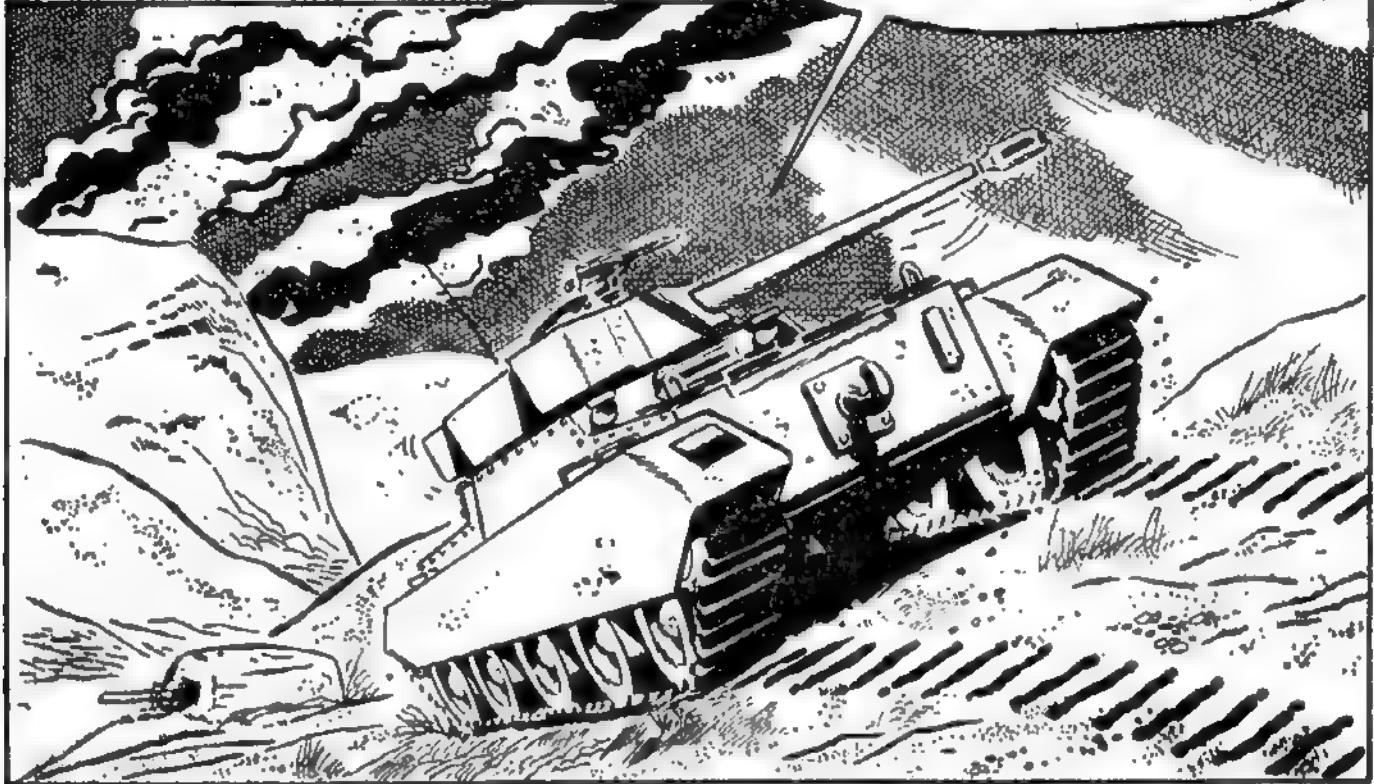
LIKE A GREAT BEETLE STRUGGLING UP A WALL, GOLIATH CHURNED HIGHER AND HIGHER — RIGHT OUT OF THE FLAME-THROWER'S RANGE. THERE WERE GERMAN MACHINE GUN POSTS ON THE HILL TOP . . . BUT CARSON WAS READY . . .

WAITING
TO CUT DOWN
ANY INFANTRY WHO
MANAGED TO CRAWL
UP HERE, EH?
WELL, TRY US
FOR SIZE!

The Iron Fist

UNDER THAT WITHERING HAIL OF HIGH-POWERED DESTRUCTION, THE ENEMY RESISTANCE WAS BLASTED OUT OF EXISTENCE. ON THE HILL TOP, GOLIATH TURNED ROUND - AND HURTLED DOWN...

COR, STRIKE A LIGHT! IF WE DON'T SMASH THROUGH THAT CONCRETE, WE'LL BE WRAPPED AROUND IT LIKE A MUSTARD PLASTER!



THEN, FLUNG LIKE AN IRRESISTIBLE FORTY TON BATTERING RAM OF CASE-HARDENED STEEL, GOLIATH STRUCK THE GERMAN POST SHATTERINGLY... CRUSHING AND SPLITTING WIDE THE CONCRETE WALLS LIKE AN EARTHQUAKE!



WITH THAT ONE POWER-PACKED HAMMER BLOW, THE GERMAN MENACE WAS DESTROYED. IN MINUTES BRITISH INFANTRY POURED PAST — AND GOLIATH'S TWO COHORTS WERE PULLING HER FROM THE RUBBLE . . .



THE SECURING OF THE ALLIED BRIDGEHEADS WENT ON, AS BRITISH AND AMERICAN TROOPS THRUST INLAND RELENTLESSLY. FOR THREE WEEKS THE SPECIAL TANK TROOP BATTLED FORWARD YARD BY YARD . . . UNTIL . . .



Chapter 5. BATTLE OF GIANTS

WITHIN AN HOUR THEY WERE RUMBLING BETWEEN THE SHELL BATTERED BUILDINGS OF GALTAIN ...

THE FOLK HERE HAVE HAD A PRETTY ROUGH TIME, SIR!



THEIR DEFENSIVE POSITION WAS JUST EAST OF THE TOWN — ASTRIDE THE ONLY ROUTE ANY GERMAN ATTACK COULD TAKE BETWEEN TWO THICK WOODS. BEYOND THE WOODS WERE BRITISH INFANTRY . . .

WHAT IS THE LATEST INFORMATION, CAPTAIN?

MY MEN ARE ON THE HIGH GROUND, SIR. JERRY'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER — AND HE CAN'T CROSS BECAUSE OF THE BLOWN BRIDGES. SO THIS ISN'T A DANGER SPOT, EXCEPT FOR GERMAN SHELL FIRE!



THAT NIGHT QUIETNESS WAS A CLOAK OVER THEIR SECTOR, WHILE TO THE NORTH DUELING HEAVY GUNS SPLIT THE NIGHT WITH GROWING FURY— UNTIL AN HOUR BEFORE DAWN . . .



IN SECONDS, GOLIATH WAS ALONE — AND AS THE HOURS DRAGGED BY, THE THUNDERING GUNS BUILT UP TO A DEAFENING CRESCENDO . . .

THEN SUDDENLY, IT HAPPENED!

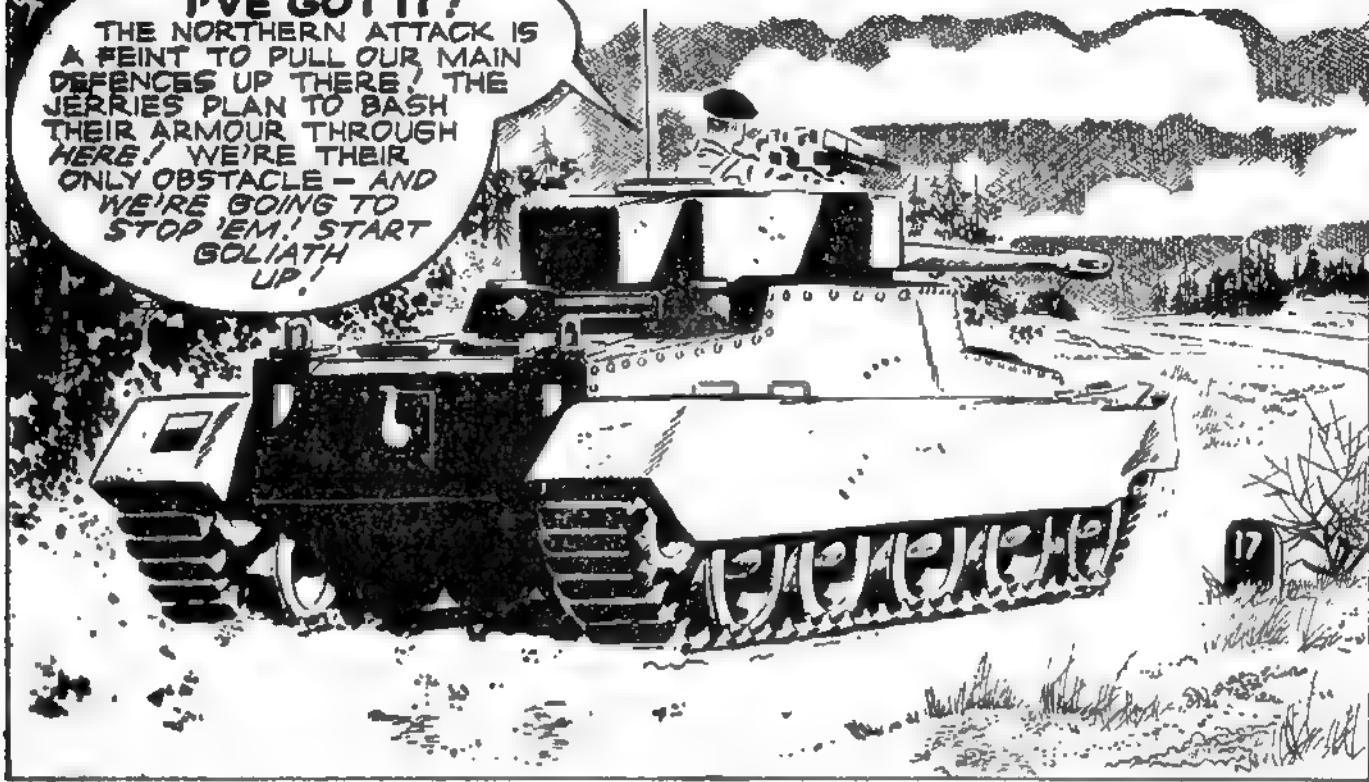


The Iron Fist

HARD ON THE MESSENGER'S WORDS, AND ABOVE THE ROARING BARRAGE, THEY HEARD THE CLOSE CRACKLE OF RIFLE FIRE FROM THE EAST! IN A FLASH, CARSON UNDERSTOOD . . .

I'VE GOT IT!

THE NORTHERN ATTACK IS A FEINT TO PULL OUR MAIN DEFENCES UP THERE, THE JERRIES PLAN TO BASH THEIR ARMOUR THROUGH HERE! WE'RE THEIR ONLY OBSTACLE - AND WE'RE GOING TO STOP 'EM! START GOLIATH UP!



RIPPING THE THROTTLE THROUGH TO EMERGENCY SPEED, TUG SENT GOLIATH RACING BETWEEN THE WOODS - INTO THE WIDE OPEN SPACE BEYOND . . . WHERE THREE ARMOUR-CLAD MONSTERS WERE SNARLING ON THE RIVER BANK . . .

THERE THEY ARE - AND, BY GEORGE, THEY'RE PANTHERS. AND MORE WAITING TO COME OVER! LEAVE THE TANKS, CORPORAL - OPEN UP ON THE BARGES!



GOLIATH'S GUN SWUNG — AND ROARED DEAFENINGLY . . .

HERE COMES THE PANTHERS' ANSWER— BUT WE'LL GET THAT OTHER BARGE FIRST!



THE NEXT SPLIT SECOND, THE ENEMY TANKS FIRED AS ONE — THREE SHELLS SCREECHED PAST WITHIN INCHES, BUT ONE STRUCK WITH A SHUDDERING PUNCH. THEN GOLIATH BLASTED HER ANGER ANEW . . .

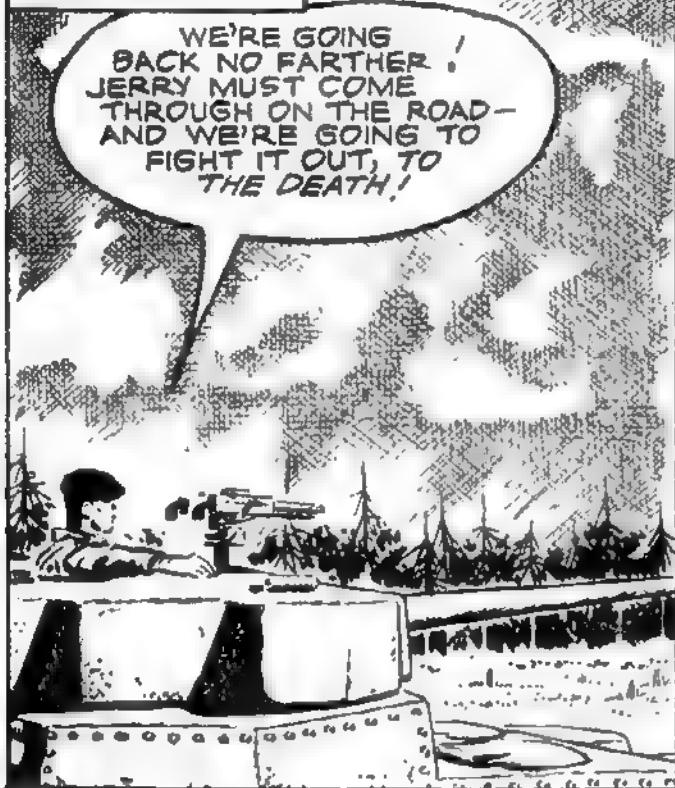
YOU'VE BATTERED IT TO MATCHWOOD! AND WE'LL BE READY FOR THE SALVAGE DUMP IF YOU DON'T GET US OUT FAST, WILSON!



The Iron Fist

THE AIR WAS A FLAME-RENT TEMPEST OF EXPLOSIVE FURY FLUNG DOWN BY THE ADVANCING PANTHERS AS GOLIATH SPUN - AND RACED BACK THROUGH THE WOODS . . .

WE'RE GOING BACK NO FARTHER ! JERRY MUST COME THROUGH ON THE ROAD - AND WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT IT OUT, TO THE DEATH !



EACH MAN FELT THE ICY BREATH OF FEAR TOUCH HIM . . . AND PASS ON . . . LEAVING ONLY A NEW CALM RESOLUTION THAT FORGED THEM INTO A COLD, DEADLY EFFICIENT MACHINE OF WAR. THEN THE FIRST BLACK CROSSSED ENEMY CAME . . . AND A BLAZING THUNDERBOLT BURST UNDER ITS TURRET WITH ARMOUR-RIPPING VIOLENCE . . .



TORN OPEN LIKE A TIN FOIL TOY, THE PANTHER SMASHED TO A STOP AND SLEWED HALF ACROSS THE ROAD. BUT FROM BEHIND IT A GUN BELCHED FLAME . . .



EVEN AS THE ENEMY SHOT STRUCK, GOLIATH BELLOWED A SHATTERING ANSWER !

NOW THE TWO WRECKED PANTHERS WERE A SHELL-PROOF BARRICADE ACROSS THE ROAD. FROM BEHIND IT, THE THIRD PANTHER BEGAN TO POUND GOLIATH WITHOUT MERCY . . .

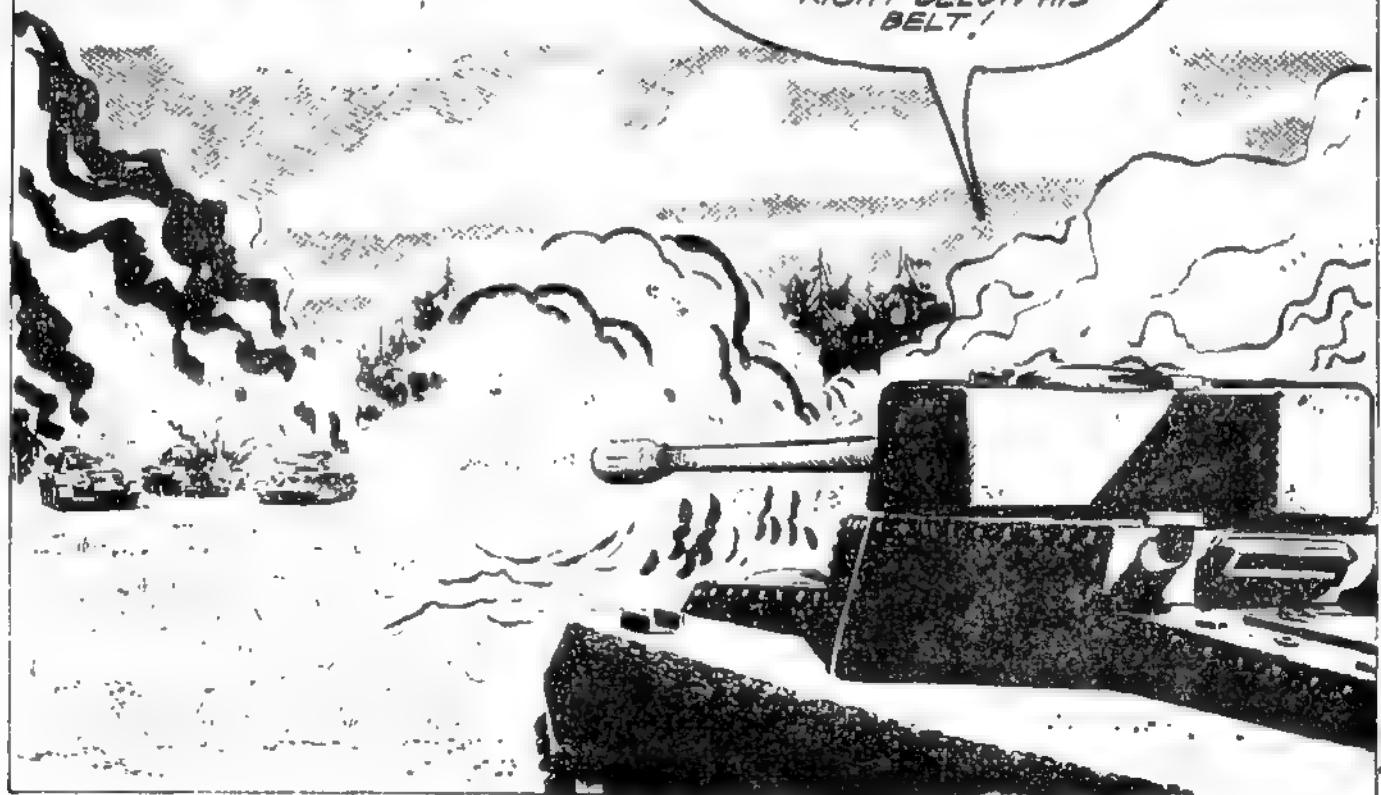
THERE'S A THOUSAND TO ONE IDEA, SIR—
BUT ANYTHING'S WORTH TRYING NOW!

WE...
CAN'T... TAKE...
MUCH... MORE,
CORPORAL - IF...
ONLY... WE...
COULD... GET...
THE BRUTE!



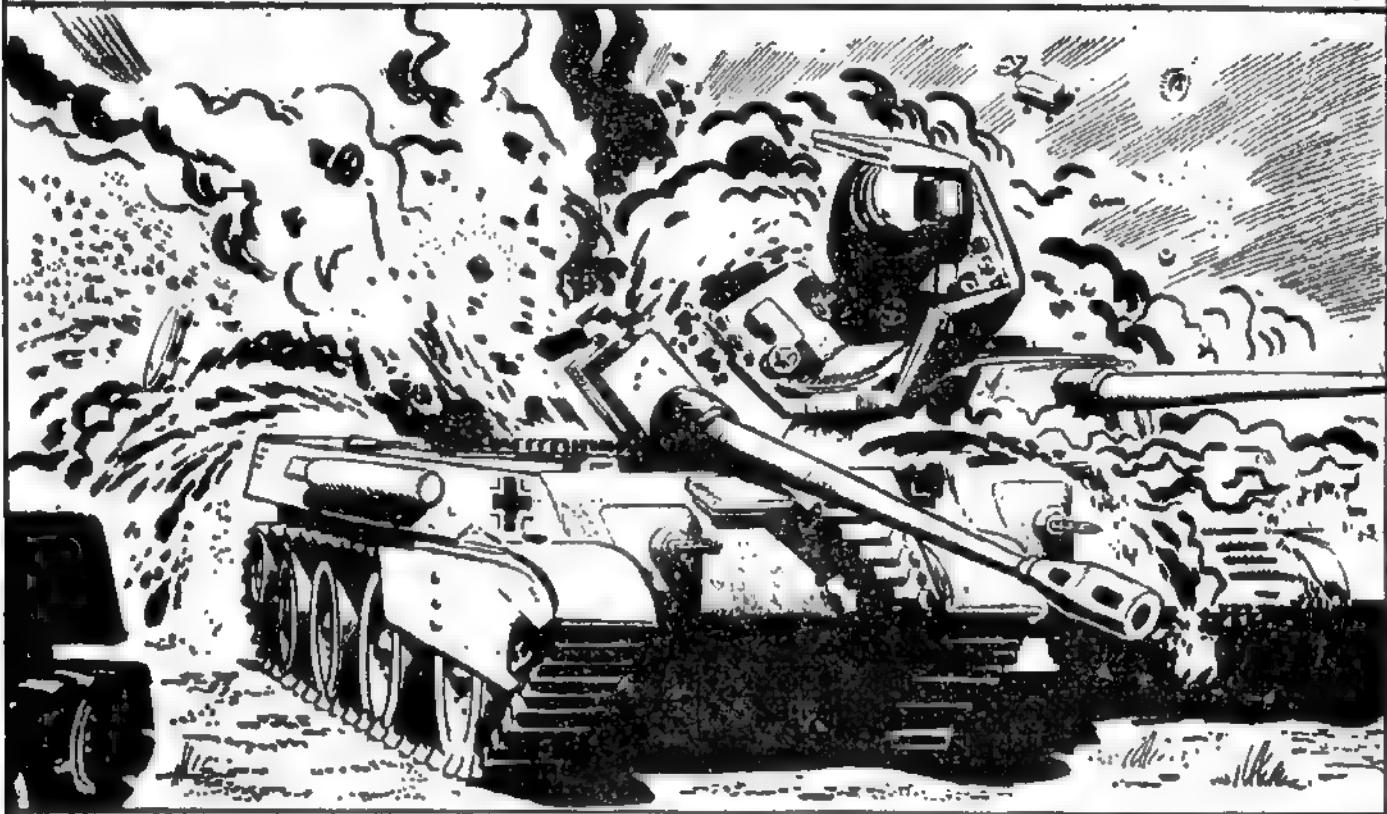
GOLIATH'S GUN DIPPED LOW—
AND JOHNNY GRAY JABBED
DESPERATELY AT THE
FIRING LEVER . . .

YOU'VE DONE IT,
JOHNNY—BOUNCED IT
THROUGH THE GAP,
RIGHT BELOW HIS
BELT!



The Iron Fist

THE RICOCHETTING HIGH EXPLOSIVE SHELL BORED UP THROUGH THE PANTHER'S THIN UNDERSKIN - THEN THE WHOLE TANK DISINTEGRATED INTO A VOLCANO OF DESTRUCTION... AND ONE MASSIVE PIECE OF ARMOURED STEEL WAS HURLED BACK - SMASHING INTO THE LAST PANTHER!



BRUISED AND BLEEDING FROM MINOR WOUNDS, THE BRITISH CREW CLIMBED WEARILY FROM THE BATTERED HULK WHICH HAD BEEN GOLIATH. ALREADY INFANTRYMEN WERE ROUNDING UP THE GERMAN SURVIVORS...



THEN FROM BEHIND THEM CAME ANOTHER VOICE, HEAVY WITH A FRENCH ACCENT AND LIGHT WITH ADMIRATION . . .

OUI, M'SIEUR—
AND YOU SAVED GALTAIN,
ALSO! LES SALOIS BOCHES
WOULD HAVE DESTROYED THE
TOWN — AND MASSACRED THE
PEOPLE IN REVENGE FOR WHAT
WE FIGHTERS OF THE
RESISTANCE DID TO THEM!
THIS BATTLE, AND THE
BRAVE ENGLISH WHO
CRUSHED THE PANZERS,
WILL NEVER
BE FORGOTTEN IN
GALTAIN!



THE NEXT INSTANT THE SKY WAS SLASHED TO SHREDS AS THE BRITISH ARTILLERY OPENED UP ON THE PANZER CONCENTRATION EAST OF THE RIVER. FOR TWO HOURS THE OBLITERATING HAIL OF SHELLS WENT ON. THEN, AS IT ENDED, BUSTER FORCE TANKS ROARED UP . . .

WHILE
WE WERE ON
THAT WILD GOOSE
CHASE, WE HEARD
OF YOUR FANTASTIC,
BATTLE BY RADIO.
BY HEAVENS, IT'S
A MIRACLE YOU'RE
STILL ALIVE!

WE'RE
STILL WONDERING
TOO, SIR! 'FRAID OUR
BATTLE WAGON IS A
COMPLETE WRITE-OFF—
WE'LL HAVE TO GET
A NEW BUS FROM
THE NEAREST
ARMOURED
DIV.

IT'LL
BE JUST LIKE
LEAVING THE FIFTH
MEMBER OF THE
TEAM — AND
THE BEST!



THE SPECIAL TANK TROOP'S SUCCESS HAD BEEN PROVED—
AND TOP PRIORITY ORDERS WERE ISSUED FOR THE
MANUFACTURING OF SCORES OF THE NEW TANKS.
MEANWHILE, MARK CARSON AND HIS SPLENDID CREW
FOUGHT ON IN THE BATTLES THAT WERE TO LIBERATE
EUROPE AND FINALLY CRUSH THE EVIL POWER OF NAZI
GERMANY. BUT EVEN THOUGH THE TANKS THEY FOUGHT
IN WERE SUPERB WEAPONS . . .
**SOMEHOW NONE WERE THE SAME AS
GOLIATH!**



... AND GOLIATH? THE GREAT TANK WAS LEFT WHERE
SHE HAD WON HER GREATEST VICTORY — BUT NOT
AS A USELESS, RUSTING HULK! FOR, TO THE PEOPLE OF
GALTAIN, GOLIATH HAD SAVED THEM FROM
ANNIHILATION. HER ARMoured SHELL WAS CLEANED AND
POLISHED, FOREVER TO BE A SHINING SYMBOL OF THE
FRENCH PEOPLE'S RESPECT FOR THE BRAVE MEN WHO
HAD FOUGHT TO FREE THEIR COUNTRY.

GOLIATH IS THERE TO THIS DAY!

**ALSO ON SALE NOW
FOR WAR THRILLS . . . ACTION . . . DRAMA . . .**

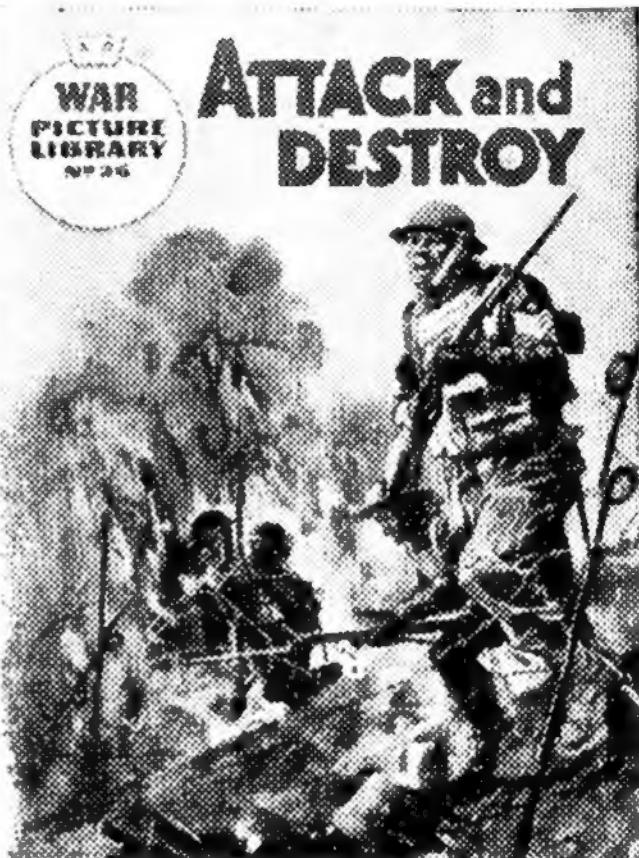
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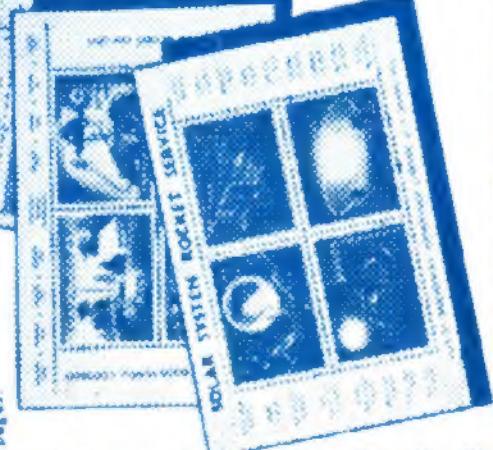
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